



DRAFT Central Coast
Positive Ageing Strategy 2021-2026

Community Partnerships Unit, Central Coast Council

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we live and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge the authority, wisdom and knowledge of Elders within the Aboriginal community.

Mayor's Message

I am proud to present the Central Coast Positive Ageing Strategy.

With our beautiful natural environments and traditionally relaxed lifestyle, the Central Coast is home to many older residents who are vibrant, active and valued members of our local community. This has contributed positively to our identity and is something to be celebrated and appreciated.

Our older residents make a significant contribution to our community as workers, volunteers, neighbours, friends, parents and grandparents. They are a rich resource of knowledge, ideas and wisdom providing the advice, experience and support to our daily lives. They are valued as important community and cultural leaders.

We are all ageing and with much longer life expectancies now than previous generations, we have more opportunities to lead active and involved lives as we age.

As a Council we want to support our residents to positively age.

Central Coast Council has a key role to play in supporting our residents to live longer, healthier and fulfilled lives. We need to ensure our region is age-friendly; provides opportunities for social connections, inclusion and participation; promotes health and wellbeing; residents have access to information and services; they can get around easily and safely; have access to appropriate and affordable housing options enabling them to age in place; and we continue to recognise and celebrate their valued contributions and achievements.

It is evident that those residents' who are well connected, participate in community life and have support networks have greater capacity to enjoy their older years.

This Strategy represents our commitment to our older residents over the next 5 years, guiding us to plan, develop and implement programs, activities, services and infrastructure that respond to the changing needs and aspirations of our growing older population.

It is an important step in achieving our community's vision where belonging and liveable communities sit at the heart of our Community Strategic Plan.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the wonderful residents, service providers and community groups that have contributed to the development of the Positive Ageing Strategy.

Cr Lisa Matthews

Mayor Central Coast Council

Introduction

Ageing on the Central Coast

The Central Coast has long been an attractive place for older people to live and retire. Many have grown and raised their families here, while others have settled from elsewhere, attracted by the sense of community and quality of life. People of all ages are connected by a shared appreciation of the natural environment, laid back lifestyle and friendly communities.

The area continues to see a growth in the number of older people within our community. This can be attributed to factors including increased migration, life expectancy, improved living standards, advances in health and medical technology, and the “baby boomer” population transitioning into the older age groups.

On the Central Coast 27% of the region’s population (88,887 people) are aged 60 years and above (*ABS Census 2016*). This compares with 22% for NSW and just 19% in Greater Sydney. By 2036 the number of people aged over 60 is expected to increase by almost 39% to 122,730 people.

The ageing population creates unique opportunities and challenges. An age friendly community must support people through all life stages, and whilst there are residents who are frail and require additional support from family, friends or services, a large majority of our older residents lead active lives and continue to play a vital role within our community through their shared interests, work and volunteering. The myth that retirement is a time to stop and slowdown is also increasing being diffused, with many embracing a new-found freedom away from the responsibilities of work. This gift of time is being channelled into personal interests, spending quality time with their families, life-long learning and ticking off some bucket list goals.

This has however been challenged in recent times, with the impacts of bushfires, storms and the Coronavirus pandemic being unwelcome visitors within many homes. This has shown that older people are a part of the population that are most at risk to such occurrences and changing circumstances. Our community has been required to dig deep and face adversities unmatched since the war-time era, emphasising the necessity for resilience, community connections and collegial support.

These challenges have been amplified for some of our older residents who have been required to quickly adapt to new technologies and navigate new ways of communicating in a digitally connected world.

It is with a sense of pride that we have seen the Central Coast reignite traditional neighbourhood principles and stand together in solidarity to support those who are more vulnerable. It has highlighted the importance of social connection, the value of freedom and choice, and the simple joy of being able to pop down to the local café for a quality cup of coffee and catch up with friends.

To address these changing needs, it is clear we need to rethink and refresh our approach to ensure a great quality of life for our community as they age.

What is Positive Ageing?

Positive Ageing is about maximising the quality of life and wellbeing of older people recognising that ageing is not just about physically getting older but the context in which people get older.

Positive ageing focuses on maintaining health, independence and wellbeing across the lifespan. Key factors identified by our older residents as being associated with 'positive ageing' include:

- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- Feeling good about yourself
- Being healthy and well
- Being active
- Engaging and enjoying quality social connections
- Recognition of positively contributing to the community
- Social interaction and connections with family and friends
- Being respected and valued as a community member
- Financial security
- Learning new things and passing on wisdom
- A safe and supportive living environment
- Access and availability to a range of support services and care as required
- Volunteering or participating in the workforce
- Having choice, freedom and time to do what you like
- A good quality of life
- Having access to information and services

Why a Positive Ageing Strategy?

The Positive Ageing Strategy provides the strategic direction for how Council can best deliver services that support our older residents to age healthily, feel connected and enjoy an age-friendly community.

We continue to build on the inaugural Central Coast Positive Ageing Strategy (2014) and renew Council's commitment to how we can better meet the needs and aspirations of our growing older population.

The Positive Ageing Strategy has been informed by what our older residents have told us, their aspirations and expectations, as well as research and consultation with relevant service providers.

Four key themes have emerged providing the focus for where Council can make a positive difference:

- Social Connections and Participation
- Being Better Informed and Tech Savvy
- Staying Healthy and Active
- Age-friendly Places and Spaces

These themes encompass the key domains of the World Health Organisation's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Guide.

Our Aim

Our aim is to create an age-friendly community on the Central Coast which values, supports, and empowers older people to live active and fulfilling lives.

Our older residents are well connected, have opportunities to participate in, contribute to and be included in community life. They are well informed and well-resourced as they age. Our region is age-friendly, with residents having the ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, get around easily and live as independently as possible.

Vision

Our residents are "Growing Older and Loving Life".

Positive ageing is celebrated and supported on the Central Coast – our older residents love living here, they live fulfilled lives and feel like they never want to leave.

Guiding Principles

The following principles have guided the development of this Strategy.

1. Celebrate and acknowledge the contribution of older residents

We honour the experience of ageing and value wisdom gained through life experience. We acknowledge the life-stories of those in their later years, and we value and celebrate the contributions of older residents.

2. A rights-based approach

The rights of older people are acknowledged and respected. We strive for a community that includes and values older people in all aspects of life. We want a society in which dignity, choice and freedom are achievable across our lives. We recognise the impacts of ageism and promote the benefits of positive ageing.

3. A partnership approach

The community is engaged in community life and decision-making processes, with the Positive Ageing Strategy shaped by the diverse voices of older people, stakeholders and community leaders.

4. Liveable communities

We seek to develop places and spaces that are accessible and inclusive for all. We work to ensure that people can continue to participate and remain independent as they advance in years within age-friendly communities.

5. Quality of life

We are committed to supporting the pursuit of a better quality of life across the life stages. We encourage older people to remain socially connected and maintain their physical and mental wellbeing through opportunities to participate in a diverse range of programs and activities. They can access services and infrastructure that enhance their quality of life.



Older People on the Coast

Defining 'older people'

"There is no specific age at which a person becomes 'old', and age categories do not define a person's lifestyle, aspirations or needs. A life stage approach recognises that people experience the ageing process in different ways and at different times."
(NSW Ageing Strategy)

Entering Retirement – "Empty nesters and early retirees"

- Working towards retirement or newly retired
- Likely to be independent and active
- May be working or looking for volunteering opportunities
- May still have children/grandchildren at home and/or may be caring for aged parents
- More likely to be interested in intergenerational activities, than 'seniors-specific'
- May be looking for information about:
 - staying fit and healthy
 - what's on in the community
 - retirement related financial information
 - aged care for their parents

In the swing of retirement – "Seniors"

- No longer working so have more time
- May be doing some volunteering
- Looking for opportunities to connect socially, creative outlets, fitness classes
- Still independent and active, but more likely to prefer 'senior-specific' activities
- Most likely to attend 50+ Centres
- Some people benefit from meal services to maintain their nutrition
- May be looking for information about:
 - staying fit and healthy
 - what's on in the community
 - getting assistance to stay independent

Needing higher levels of care – "Elderly"

- Needing increased assistance with day-to-day activities
- Accessing in-home or residential care
- Supported through My Aged Care (Commonwealth Government, NGOs and private sector aged care)
- May be looking for information about:
 - Getting assistance to stay independent
 - Community transport
 - Residential aged care options
 - Financial advice about moving into residential aged care

A demographic snapshot

The Central Coast has a high proportion of older people

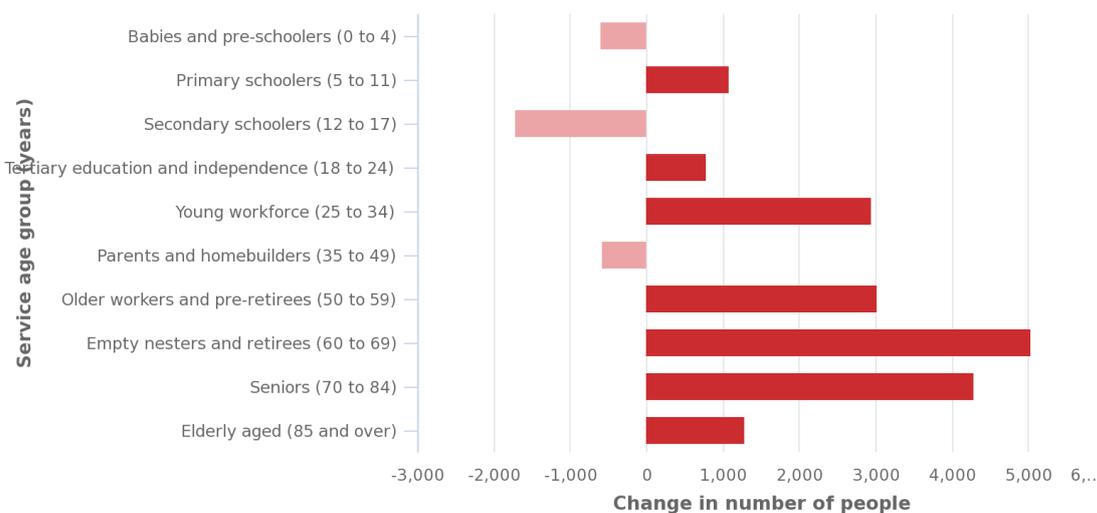
In 2016, 27.1% of the regions' population was aged 60 years and over in comparison to 21.9% for NSW. This equates to 88,887 people.

Table of Central Coast population by age group.

Age group	Number	% of total Central Coast population	Compare to % in NSW population	Change since 2011
Empty nesters and retirees (60-69)	40,357	12.3	10.8	+5,037
Seniors (70-84)	38,252	11.7	8.9	+4,285
Elderly (85+)	10,278	3.1	2.2	+1,295
Total	88,887	27.1	21.9	

Change in age structure - service age groups, 2011 to 2016

Central Coast Council area - Total persons



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 and 2016 (Usual residence data). Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

.id the population experts

The older population is increasing, and this is forecast to continue

By 2036, it is forecast that there will be an additional 35,000 people aged 60+ on the Central Coast.

Between 2016 and 2036 these increases will be:

- 60-69 years: increase of 7,575 people
- 70-84 years: increase of 20,466 people
- 85+ years: increase of 7,072 people

Where our older people live

Area	Number of people aged 65 or more	% of total population
East Brisbane Water & Coastal	13,234	19.3%
Gosford Central	4,984	7.2%
Mountains and Valleys	1,327	1.9%
Narara Valley and Ourimbah	5,824	8.5%
Northern Lakes, San Remo-Budgewoi and Toukley	10,809	15.8%
Southern Lakes and The Entrance	10,981	16.0%
West Brisbane Water and Peninsula	11,705	17.1%
Wyong, Warnervale and Gorokan	9,600	14.0%

Top 12 suburbs with largest number of people aged 65+

Suburb	Number of people aged 65 or more
1. Umina- Pearl Beach-Paton	4,065
2. Woy Woy-Blackwell	3,466
3. North Gosford-Wyoming	2,973
4. Bateau Bay	2,964
5. Lake Munmorah-Chain Valley Bay	2,700
6. Terrigal-North Avoca	2,481
7. Killarney Vale – Tumby Umbi	2,411
8. Kincumber South-Bensville-Empire Bay-Killcare	2,300
9. Budgewoi-Halekulani-Buff Point	2,287
10. Long Jetty-Shelly Beach-Toowoona-Blue Bay	2,216
11. Kincumber	2,080
12. Erina	2,075

Top 6 suburbs with the greatest proportion of people aged 65+

Suburb	Percentage of people aged 65 or more
1. Erina	43.9%
2. Ettalong Beach-Booker Bay	33.2%
3. Lake Munmorah-Chain Valley Way	32.8%
4. Toukley-Canton Beach	32.6%
5. Kincumber	29.2%
6. Woy Woy-Blackwall	27.6%

Key facts for the Central Coast population aged 65 or more

(Source: ABS Census 2016, id. profile)

Life expectancy

- In 2016, males aged 65 were expected to live to an average of 84.1 years (compared to 85.1 years for NSW).
- In 2016, females aged 65 were expected to live to an average of 86.8 years (compared to 87.7 years for NSW).

Diversity

- 5.2% identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- 5.0% were new arrivals to Australia in the 5 years prior to 2016.
- 23.4% were born overseas compared with 33.4% for NSW. The largest group came from the UK, followed by New Zealand, then Germany, Netherlands, Italy and Malta.
- 5.4% speak a language other than English at home compared with 19.3% for NSW.

Need for Assistance

- 53.6% of all people needing assistance are aged 65 or more, with 20% aged 85 or more.

Unpaid Care

- 11.4% provided unpaid care to family members with a disability or long-term illness, or old age which is similar to NSW.
- 11.0% provided unpaid child care, compared with 12.6% for NSW.

Education

- 8.9% have a Bachelor or higher degree.

- 6.7% have a diploma or advanced diploma.
- 18.6% have a vocational qualification.
- 48.2% hold no qualification which is similar to NSW.
- 233 people aged 65 or more were attending an educational institution in 2016. 57 were attending high school, 82 were attending TAFE and 81 were attending University.

Employment

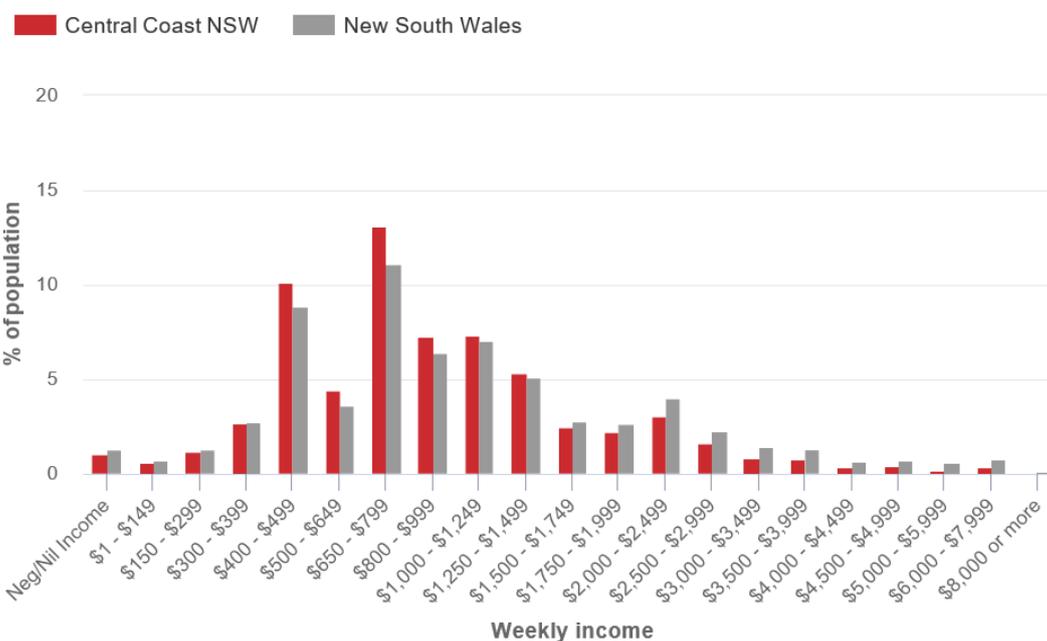
- 8.8% are still in the labour force (that means people who are employed or actively looking for work) compared to 12.4% for NSW
- Of these, 2,088 were employed full time and 3,547 are employed part time. 199 are unemployed, looking for full or part time work.

Income

- 6.2% were in households that earned a high income (more than \$2500 per week) compared to 10.8% for NSW
- 27.5% were in low income households (less than \$650 per week) compared to 25.4% for NSW.

Weekly household income, 2016

People aged 65 years or more



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016 (Enumerated data). Compiled and presented by .id, the population experts.

Household Type

- 48.9% live in couple only households compared to 46.7% for NSW
- 28% live in lone person households compared to 24.5% for NSW
- 8.8% were part of couple families with children compared to 13% for NSW
- 6.3% were in one parent families compared to 6.9% for NSW

Housing

- 66.7% fully own their own home and 10.4% were purchasing which is similar in comparison to NSW
- 11.9% were renting which is lower than for NSW 13.2%. However, there has been an increase in private renters which is concerning as renting is a less secure form of housing.
- 73.4% live in separate houses and 23% live in medium density housing (compared to 73.4% and 16.6 % for NSW).
- Over 66% of seniors live in houses with 3 or more bedrooms.

Internet connection

- In 2016 there were over 41,500 residents or 66.4% with a home internet connection, which is similar to NSW. However, this rate is much lower than for the general Central Coast population at 84.1%.
- 26% had no internet connection.



Strategic Context

Different levels of government impact on different aspects of our lives as we age. The following international, national and state policies and plans aim to create environments that support older people to live their best lives and provide an important context for this Strategy.

International

United Nations - Principles for Older Persons (1991)¹

The United Nations Principles for Older Persons advocate for the creation of opportunities for older people to participate and contribute fully within society, whilst ensuring that basic human rights such as shelter, safety and care are provided for. The principles encourage governments to support older people to have independence, participation, care, dignity and self-fulfillment.

World Health Organization - Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (2015 - 2030)²

The World Health Organization's 'Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (2015 - 2030)' states:

"Healthy Ageing is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives. Everybody can experience Healthy Ageing. Being free of disease or infirmity is not a requirement for Healthy Ageing as many older adults have one or more health conditions that, when well controlled, have little influence on their wellbeing."

The World Health Organization (WHO) has committed to five strategic objectives to promote a long and healthy life for all people:

1. Action on Healthy Ageing in every country
2. Developing age-friendly environments
3. Aligning health systems to the needs of older populations
4. Developing sustainable and equitable systems for providing long-term care
5. Improving measurement, monitoring and research on Healthy Ageing

World Health Organization - Age Friendly Cities Guide³

"An age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities."

This guide sets out age friendly principals for each of the following domains:

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/olderpersons.aspx>

² <https://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en/>

³ https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

1. Social Participation
2. Respect and social inclusion
3. Civic participation and employment
4. Communication and employment
5. Community support and health service
6. Outdoor spaces and buildings
7. Transportation
8. Housing

National

Aged Care Reform (2012) Living Longer Living Better⁴

On 1 July 2012 responsibility for aged care services and community-based services for people aged 65+ transitioned from State to Commonwealth Government under the 'Living Longer, Living Better' aged care reform (2012). The aim was to build a nationally consistent and sustainable aged care system that promotes greater choice and control for older people in determining their individual care needs.

My Aged Care was launched on 1 July 2013 to provide a single access point for all older Australian's to access government funded aged care support. The Commonwealth Housing Services Program (CHSP) provides funding for service provision and some Council's access this to provide in home care. Central Coast Council accesses only a small amount of CHSP funding for sector support. This funding has a focus on 'wellness and reablement'.

The Commonwealth Government also has responsibility for:

- the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission - which aims to protect and enhance the safety, health, well-being and quality of life for people receiving aged care.
- Aged Care Quality Standards 2019 - organisations providing Commonwealth subsidised aged care services are required to comply with these from 1 July 2019.
- National Ageing and Age Care Strategy for people from Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (2015)

State

NSW Ageing Strategy 2016-2020⁵

The 'NSW Ageing Strategy 2016-2020' aims to enhance opportunities and quality of life for older people across the state through five key priority areas:

1. Health and Wellbeing

⁴ <https://apo.org.au/node/29086>

⁵ <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/inclusion/seniors/overview>

2. Working and retiring
3. Housing choices
4. Getting around
5. Inclusive communities

Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan 2018 – 2022⁶

“The NSW Government recognizes that access to appropriate transport is the key to older people’s independence, social inclusion and overall wellbeing.”

There are 4 broad outcomes:

1. Keeping active and connected with my community
2. Staying Safe
3. Being informed
4. Maintaining independence

Did you know... My Aged Care

The Commonwealth Government provides services to help older people to remain living independently at home or to transition into supported residential accommodation through ‘My Aged Care’.

My Aged Care is the starting point to access Government-funded aged care services. It provides:

- information on the different types of aged care services available (home help or residential)
- an assessment of what you need and what you are eligible for
- referrals and support to find service providers that can meet your needs
- information on what you might need to pay towards the cost of your care

An age care assessor looks at the needs of each person to ensure that a package of support is tailored to their unique needs. Carers can also request respite to support the care recipient during a short break.

To be assessed for aged care services contact My Aged Care by phone 1800 200 422 or at www.myagedcare.gov.au

⁶ <https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/plans/older-persons-transport-and-mobility-plan-2018-2022>

Councils' Role

This Strategy is part of Council's broader planning framework called 'One Central Coast, Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028' which sets the direction for our community over the next 10 years. The 'Positive Ageing Strategy' aligns with the broad themes of 'One Central Coast': Belonging, Smart, Green, Responsible and Liveable.

Key objectives in the Community Strategic Plan that relate to older people include:

- Work within our communities to connect people, build capacity and create local solutions and initiatives
- Celebrate and continue to create opportunities for inclusion where all people feel welcome and participate in community life
- Work together to solve a range of social and health issues that may impact community wellbeing and vulnerable people
- Promote and provide a more sporting, community and cultural events and festivals
- Serve the community by providing great customer experience, value for money and quality services
- Engage with the community in meaningful dialogue and demonstrate how community participation is being used to inform decisions
- Educate the community on the value and importance of natural areas, biodiversity and encourage community involvement in caring for our natural environment
- Design and deliver pathways, walking trails and other pedestrian movement infrastructure to maximise access, inclusion and mobility to meet the needs of all community members
- Provide a range of housing options to meet the diverse and changing needs of the community including adequate affordable housing
- Promote healthy living and ensure sport, leisure, recreation and aquatic facilities and open spaces are well maintained and activated
- Invest in health care solutions including infrastructure, services and preventative programs to keep people well for longer
- Cultivate a love of learning and knowledge by providing facilities to support lifelong learning opportunities
- Provide equitable affordable, flexible and co-located community facilities based on community needs.

There are many areas where Council can play a key role in positive ageing. These include:

- providing options for older people to connect, learn, exercise and have fun
- ensuring that older people are included, respected and celebrated as an important part of our community, and that the voices of older people are heard

- making Council services and facilities more accessible, such as libraries, parks, pools and leisure facilities, art galleries and theatres, and providing access to user friendly customer service options
- providing information to older people about what is on in their community, how they can get involved and how to get support
- providing or supporting activities and programs that promote positive ageing, physical activity and mental wellbeing
- making towns and communities more age-friendly so it is easier to get around, stay independent and age in place.

There are some aspects of life, impacting older people, that Council does not control. For example, residential aged care and home care is managed by the Commonwealth Government, public transport and health both sit with the NSW Government. However, where appropriate, Council will partner with others and/or advocate on behalf of the community in relation to these areas.

To achieve our aim and vision we require an understanding and commitment from all members of the community. We recognise that there are many agencies and community groups across the Central Coast that deliver great services to our older residents. Through this Strategy we can share information which can assist in identifying opportunities for collaboration and new partnerships. We invite you to actively work with us.

[Links to other Council Plans](#)

The Positive Ageing Strategy is also linked to the following Council Plans:

- Disability Inclusion and Access Plan 2017-2021
- Central Coast Cultural Plan 2020-2025
- Central Coast Affordable and Alternative Housing Strategy
- Central Coast Youth Strategy 2019-2024
- Central Coast Pedestrian and Mobility Plan 2019-2020
- Central Coast Bike Plan 2019-2029

Let's Talk Positive Ageing

How we engaged

This Positive Ageing Strategy has been developed with our older community. It is a direct response to what older people living on the Central Coast have highlighted as important to them. For the purposes of developing the Strategy residents aged 50 years and over were also invited to participate as we were keen to capture the aspirations and needs of pre-retirees who will be part of our ageing population in the future.

Community consultation has been an ongoing and evolving process since the development of the first Central Coast Positive Ageing Strategy in 2014, when over 2,500 residents, service providers and stakeholders were consulted to share their opinion on what Positive Ageing meant to them, what factors were important to live a happy and healthy life and challenges faced.

An extensive engagement process was also conducted in 2017 and 2018 as part of the Community Strategic Plan. Over 6,500 residents told us what they valued about their local area and the Central Coast, their aspirations for the future, local challenges and priorities and ideas for what could make living on the Coast better. We were able to draw on data from our older residents who participated in this engagement.

In 2019, we undertook further research and targeted community and stakeholder engagement to gain a fresh perspective on the priorities, needs and hopes of our older community as we move into the next stage of planning for older residents. This has resulted in an updated Positive Ageing Strategy, a revision of strategic themes and a targeted action plan.

How we undertook our latest engagement

Between September and November in 2019 we sought community and stakeholder feedback on how Council could best support older people on the Central Coast to age positively.

- Hard copy surveys were distributed through libraries, our 50+ Centres, neighbourhood centres and Council's administration buildings.
- The surveys were advertised through local and seniors' newspapers, Council's Your Voice Our Coast website and through social media.
- Service providers were asked to complete an online survey.
- Face to face focus groups and interviews were held with members of Seniors' groups and service providers.
- An interactive Age Board was displayed at 50+ Centres and shopping centres asking residents to share their thoughts "As I age I can....." and "As I age I would like....".

12,146 social media users were reached, generating 70 likes, comments and shares.

626 visits were made to the 'Your Voice Our Coast' website.

352 community members completed online or hard copy surveys.

38 service providers responded to online surveys.

54 people participated in face to face focus groups and interviews.

Responses were received from the following age groups:

- 50-65 years – 152 responses
- 66-75 years – 116 responses
- 75-85 years – 74 responses
- 85 years or more - 7 responses.

[An overview of what our older residents told us](#)

From the 'Community Strategic Plan' our older residents told us they loved:

- The natural environment – beaches, bush and waterways
- Our relaxed, quiet and laid-back lifestyle
- Cafes, restaurants and shops
- The friendliness of people and sense of community
- Parks, trees and open spaces.

They said we could improve:

- Roads, kerb and guttering
- Public and community transport
- Footpaths and bike paths
- The maintenance of our natural areas including waterways and bush
- Open space, parks and green space.

From our recent consultations:

Older people on the Central Coast value health and fitness activities, opportunities for social connection and outdoor experiences. They want to be better informed about what is happening in the community including the myriad of free or low-cost activities, programs and events they can participate in and how they can access information about services and support when they need them. They want to be able to get around the community with improvements needed to the public domain, footpaths and bike paths, ensuring our places and space are accessible and access to better transport options.

Whilst some older residents want to participate in seniors-specific activities in dedicated seniors' centres, others preferred to be outside and/or participate in intergenerational activities as valued members of the community. Social connection,

a low-cost nutritious meal service, a place to meet friends, fitness and educational activities are the main benefits of the 50+ Centres.

A snap shot of some of the key findings from our latest survey are highlighted below:

What activities are most important to you?

1. Fitness (in general or classes like yoga, dancing, tai chi, zumba)
2. Social activities and events
3. Walking and running (including bush walking and walking groups)
4. Swimming (beaches and pools, water aerobics)
5. Bike riding (including mountain biking)
6. Library
7. Arts, craft and music (including theatre and entertainment)
8. Organised sports.

What would you like to access that doesn't exist in your community?

1. Bike paths and mountain bike trails
2. Footpaths, bush walking trails and walking groups
3. More pools (accessible, hydrotherapy, water aerobics)
4. Exercise classes, including balance and strength
5. Art, craft, literary activities.

What else should Council do to make the community more liveable?

1. Improve and increase footpaths and cycleways
2. Provide information on what services and activities exist, including an information officer/aged care navigator
3. Make all Council facilities accessible and provide accessible parking
4. Transport assistance
5. Outdoor facilities e.g. seating, trails, fitness equipment.

What actions could Council do better to support older people?

1. Improve transport
2. Promote services and activities/information provision
3. Improve footpaths to make it easier to get around
4. Access to low cost positive ageing and wellbeing programs, activities and events
5. More places for older people to come together.

What sort of information do you want to get?

1. What's on in the community – including Council and other activities
2. Information on classes and activities for seniors
3. Information on community and other transport options
4. How to access part-time work or volunteering opportunities
5. How to get help to stay living independently
6. Information of healthy living

7. Financial advice for retirees.

How could the 50+ Centres be improved?

1. Promote what's on – provide a schedule of activities
2. Provide a greater range of activities
3. Provide 'younger' type activities/cater for both younger and older people
4. Provide intergenerational activities
5. Provide outdoor activities such as walking groups
6. Provide after-hours activities.

How can Council support older people where there are no 50+ Centres?

1. Provide transport linked to centres, activities, shops, GP
2. Run programs from other venues, like community centres, libraries, scout halls, pools
3. Promotion of what's on – not just Council activities
4. Encourage others to set up groups/activities or link with existing local groups to deliver activities.

Further insights are included under each of the key themes.

Key Themes

We listened to what our older residents and service providers had to say, and four key themes emerged.

Theme 1: Social Connections and Participation

Our older residents are connected and have opportunities to participate in, contribute to and be included in community life.

This theme is about:

- Connections with family, friends and neighbours
- Feeling welcome and valued
- Reducing social isolation and loneliness
- Encouraging participation in social activities:
 - community events and activities
 - positive ageing programs
 - creative ageing programs
 - continued learning
 - civic activities
- Intergenerational interactions
- Working and volunteering options
- Celebrating ageing
- Valuing and recognising contributions
- Resilience and strength against adversity (natural disasters, pandemics, personal safety, elder abuse)

Theme 2: Being Better Informed and Tech Savvy

Our older residents are well informed and well-resourced as they age.

This theme is about:

- Promotion of social activities - knowing what's on
- Awareness of events, activities, services and facilities
- Access to information to assist positive ageing (such as healthy living, retiring well, financial planning, transport options, living independently)
- Access to information about available services and support options (including My Aged Care, in-home support, home modifications, residential care, retirement living options, NDIS, transport options)
- The right information at the right time
- Age friendly formats
- Age friendly services
- Using digital technology

Theme 3: Staying Healthy and Active

Our older residents are encouraged to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle and can access health services.

This theme is about:

- Being physically active
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Encouraging participation in fitness, recreation, leisure and sporting activities
- Access to open spaces and the natural environment for a range of outdoor and active lifestyle experiences
- Preventative health and healthy ageing (such as healthy eating and nutrition, falls prevention)
- Prevention and support for people living with chronic illness (such as dementia)
- Access to health and other support services

Theme 4: Age-friendly Places and Spaces

Our older residents feel welcome and can access public places and spaces, they can move easily and safely around the community and are supported to age in place.

This theme is about:

- Age-friendly public places and spaces (including facilities, parks, open space, town centres, outdoor seating, lighting, signage, public toilets)
- Accessibility
- Universal design
- Footpaths and shared pathways
- Walkability and cycling
- Parking
- Public transport (affordability, accessibility, availability)
- Community transport and flexible transport options
- Community safety (including pedestrian and road safety)
- Somewhere to call home (including housing options, affordability, ageing in place)

Theme 1: Social Connections and Participation

Our older residents are connected and have opportunities to participate in, contribute to and be included in community life.

This theme focuses on the importance of social connections and participation and the key role that older people play within our community. It acknowledges the valuable contribution that older people make within families, the community and workplaces. It aims to ensure that equitable opportunities are provided for people to connect, grow and provide support to one another.

Our community said “As I age, I would like to...

- make new friends
- be respected
- pass on my knowledge
- help the younger generation grow
- say yes to new experiences
- not take life too seriously
- give back to the world
- get on with my bucket list”.

Belonging

Goal 1.1: Increase opportunities for older residents to build connections and relationships.

By nature, people are social beings. Social connection is a fundamental human need and we naturally seek out the companionship of others. This need does not change as we advance in years and being socially connected in today’s world is now more important than ever.

Community participation whether through participating in sport, social, cultural and leisure activities, volunteering or attending community events, builds friendships, connections and networks within the community. This involvement in turn creates feelings of inclusion and a sense of belonging.

As people move into retirement, they tend to have more time to take part in social activities and enjoy quality time with friends and family which can be a source of joy, fun and happiness.

The positive benefits of social connection have been widely documented, with strong relationships and family ties being shown to:

- improve physical health and psychological well-being
- create a positive sense of self and belonging

- protect from functional decline
- lower rates of anxiety and depression
- increase self-esteem
- increase levels of empathy, trust and cooperation
- generate a positive loop of social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

It is evident that those residents' who are well connected, participate in community life and have support networks have greater capacity to enjoy their older years.

Older people are also great contributors to our local community. Opportunities exist through intergenerational programs to improve the recognition and respect of older people, embrace these connections and share knowledge between generations. Through programs that encourage mentoring and interactions, younger and older people can connect with and value each other.

Cultural factors are also significant and impact on the ageing experience. Older people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are upheld as leaders, including those with cultural authority as elders. Older people are key to family and community cohesion and have the role within community to teach and pass traditional knowledge, culture, history and language.

Older people from culturally diverse backgrounds are also often responsible for teaching their family members and communities about culture and heritage.

On the other hand, increased life expectancy and population ageing can also potentially place more individuals at risk of social isolation, marginalisation and social exclusion. It is concerning that levels of loneliness and disconnection are growing in our communities, with older people being one of the most impacted groups.

Relationships Australia state that Australia is currently experiencing a loneliness epidemic⁷, with lack of social connection damaging our health to the same degree as obesity, smoking and high blood pressure.

There are many reasons why social isolation and loneliness become more common as we age, with contributing factors including retiring from the workforce, living alone (28% of our older residents aged over 65 live alone), loss of friends, a partner or close family ties. It requires confidence to make new friends and, for some, this can become more challenging with age. Factors such as transport, access to information, use of technology, health and levels of mobility or disability may also impact people's ability to participate. These issues may be made worse by low income, discrimination or social exclusion.

“When connecting people, it needs to be an embrace, not just an invitation.”

‘NSW Ageing Strategy consultation, 2020’

⁷ Relationships Australia (2018) *Is Australia experiencing an epidemic of loneliness?*

It is therefore important to identify and remove barriers to social participation and inclusion, as well as create opportunities for people to connect and belong.

Continued learning

Goal 1.2: Provide enriching learning opportunities

Continued or lifelong learning is key to a 'positive ageing' approach. Many people share a desire to continue to learn, develop skills and share knowledge across the lifespan.

"I want to remain creative and curious"

Age board comment

The benefit of continued learning extends beyond improved skills and mental stimulation. Benefits include greater social and physical wellbeing, better memory, greater self-esteem and individual identity. Continued learning helps people adapt, be resilient and creative, and remain active participants in an ever-changing society and economy.

There are many opportunities for continued learning across the Central Coast, with community colleges, the U3A and classes at local community centres being well attended. Some older people attend more formal educational institution such as TAFE or University, even into their 80s.

As we move forward, we will work in partnership with the older community to ensure that the range of courses and skills development opportunities offered, within 50+ Centres, libraries and other community locations, meet the diverse range of interests of older people. There is also a need to address barriers such as high costs, poor transport, and make continued learning opportunities available to everyone.

Service providers and individuals have advocated for the importance of sharing knowledge, skills and experience through cross-generational programs and activities. The potential for younger people to teach about new technology and for older people to mentor from their base of experience in all aspects of business, creativity, community activity and recreation was reiterated.

Creative learning and participation at all levels, from amateur to professional, in areas such as singing, performing, painting, writing and dancing provides opportunity for mental well-being as well as sharing and learning about diverse cultures and traditions. This is also supported in the 'Central Coast Cultural Plan 2020-2025' where creativity is supported as a form of continued learning at all ages, as well as an expression of self and culture.

Being Involved

Goal 1.3: Promote and support volunteering and options to remain in the workforce

People are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. This means that people have an increased need to be involved in community life and to make important contributions to society well into older age. This can be done through work, volunteering, gaining and sharing knowledge, and through community participation and leadership.

Australians are spending longer in the workforce than ever before. From 2011 to 2016 there was a 1.7% increase in labour force participation for people aged 65 and above on the Central Coast, and this trend is reiterated across Australia (ABS, 2016).

Continued employment in meaningful work can provide great rewards to older workers, society and the economy. Mature age workers contribute skills, experience, communication skills and a strong work ethic. They often support less experienced workers through mentorship and transfer of skills.

Despite this, age discrimination in the workplace is still prevalent. Research commissioned by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) found that almost a third (30%) of organisations indicate a reluctant to recruit workers above a certain age. Many respondents indicated an unwillingness to hire or invest in training workers over the age of 50.⁸ This highlights a need to address age discrimination in the workplace, create age-friendly work environments, support and incentivise employers to employ, retain and train mature aged staff and provide options for phased retirement planning.

We have a strong and growing culture of volunteering in the region with many wishing to assist others within their community as their amount of spare time increases in retirement. Almost a fifth of residents give their time to volunteering programs.

Volunteering provides an essential service and is instrumental in ensuring that many community and environmental organisations remain sustainable and continue to service the community. There are a wide range of volunteering opportunities to choose from, and it is important to match volunteers with roles that provide fulfillment and a sense of purpose. When the right match is made, volunteering provides a range of benefits for older people.

There is also a need to provide a diversity of ways for older people to be involved in volunteering or mentoring programs, to tap into their skills and knowledge, as well as flexible options so older residents can combine travel or work with volunteering.

⁸ Australian HR Institute (2018) Employing Older Australians Report, commissioned by the Australian Human Rights Commission

Council provides several volunteering opportunities within our environmental programs (land care, bush care, dune care), 50+ Centres, Art Gallery, Theatres, Libraries and Friends of the Cemetery program.

Did you know:

There are over 600 volunteers in our Environmental Volunteer Program, with almost half (47%) aged between 60-69 years and a further 33% aged over 70. These volunteers undertake valuable work including ecological restoration and land conservation in bushland and coastal natural reserves, recreation area maintenance in open space parks, garden and road verge maintenance, rubbish and graffiti removal. Volunteers are also involved with native plant seed collection and plant propagation through Council's nursery, take part in citizen science activities such as flora and fauna monitoring, and participate in one-off events such as annual National Tree Day plantings and floating Landcare.

Benefits of Volunteering

- Socialising, meeting other people, developing new friendships
- Helps you stay physically and mentally healthy and active
- Enables you to share knowledge, experience and mentor others
- Provides opportunities to give back to others, help those in need or protect and nurture the environment
- Increases the production of happy hormones, which help to alleviate depression, stress and anxiety
- Personal satisfaction

Celebrating, respecting and valuing older people as leaders

Goal 1.4: Celebrate and recognise the leadership and contributions of older residents

Older people are leaders and sources of knowledge and experience in the community, business and family. But this is not always understood, celebrated or valued as much as it should be.

It is important that we acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of older people and continue to recognise and support their contribution and role as leaders, volunteers, mentors and people with community authority.

Older people have a wealth of knowledge, experience and wisdom that can be passed on to younger generations. Older residents can also provide valuable information about their local communities. It is important to provide meaningful opportunities for them to be able to participate in decision-making about proposed local projects and initiatives and fulfil local community leadership roles.

There are often negative stereotypes associated with ageing such as frailty, illness, memory loss, being a burden and these can lead to a loss of older people's sense of self and impact on their physical health.

The WHO strategic objective for commitment to action on health and ageing states that:

“some of the most important barriers to action and effective public health policy on Healthy Ageing are pervasive misconceptions, negative attitudes and assumptions about ageing and older people.”

It is important to challenge these stereotypes by adopting positive attitudes to ageing and promoting positive images of older residents emphasising the roles they play in our community. Our older residents should be respected and looked after by all community members.

Strengthening resilience

Goal 1.5: Support and assist older residents to be more resilient

Resilience may be defined in terms of processes that influence how well individuals cope with adversity. Older age is often associated with transitions and challenges such as declining physical and cognitive health, loss of partner and loved ones, financial issues and in some cases increased social isolation.

The increasing frequency and intensity of weather events, such as recent floods and bushfires, combined with the Coronavirus pandemic presents new challenges for older residents as they can be vulnerable during these times. Some older residents can also draw on their experience and resources to assist others during an emergency.

Social networks and relationships are an important buffer in times of adversity and have the potential to contribute to coping and bolstering the capacity for resilience. These may be provided by close family members and friends or from wider social networks of friends, neighbours and the community.

When we think about the needs of older residents and provide timely and accessible information during emergency events, our disaster preparedness and disaster recovery efforts are strengthened.

It is also important that older residents have the skills needed to remain safely living at home as they age. Common accidents involving older people include trips and falls, burns, poisonings, poor lighting, unsafe electrical appliances, fire and home security. Older residents are also viewed as easy targets by unscrupulous 'tradesmen', scammers, nuisance callers and cybercrime.

With an ageing population, elder abuse has emerged as an issue. This may include financial abuse, psychological abuse (including social isolation, neglect, physical or

sexual abuse). Research suggests that most abuse of older people is intra-family and intergenerational making it challenging and complex to address. It is important that older people, families and carers are equipped with information to assist in identifying and addressing situations of elder abuse including knowledge of where they can seek help.

What our older residents told us

- A sense of belonging, of feeling part of a community and maintaining links with friends and family was a major feature of retaining a positive attitude to ageing.
- While there appears to be abundant opportunities for social interaction with a plethora of sporting, cultural, creative and social organisations to participate in across the Central Coast, many older residents requested more information about what's on including both Council and non-Council activities.
- Social activities and events were rated as the second most important category, followed by cultural activities such as visiting a library, arts, craft and music.
- 27% of older residents, however, said they never participate in social activities which highlights the potential risk of social isolation.
- While 92% of service providers saw 'social connection' as the greatest benefit of 50+ Centres, a further 82% thought that Council should also focus on programs, activities and events to support positive ageing across the Central Coast.
- 64% of survey respondents wanted to participate in activities that are intergenerational. Baby boomers told us they are more likely to participate in intergenerational or general community activities than older aged groups who are more likely to want to participate in senior-specific activities.
- 50+ Centres are greatly valued as a place for older people to meet friends. 74% of survey respondents valued the services offered. 29% of people like activities being held in the 50+ Centres because the members share common interests, because they find it less intimidating or because they feel like they can be themselves. 34.5% would prefer activities not to be in 50+ Centres as they don't see themselves as old, do not want to be segregated or just see age as a number.
- When asked what activities should be offered for people entering or in early retirement, the most common response from service providers was volunteering opportunities. Volunteering was rated 5th for people in the swing of retirement. Older residents told us they get a great deal of benefits and pleasure from being involved in the community. Some people in the community are unsure as to where to start looking to find volunteer work.
- Community members placed great importance on education and learning, to continue developing and sharing skills and knowledge to enable the continuation of meaningful work, leadership, self-worth and resilience.

Ways you can stay connected

- Actively seek out information about what is happening in your local community
- Say yes to new opportunities
- Participate in community events
- Get involved in cultural and recreational activities
- Take up a new sport or hobby
- Take an interest in others. Be inclusive, compassionate and kind
- Introduce yourself to your neighbours and help-out when they need a hand
- Be open to offers of friendship, support or assistance
- Undertake meaningful work in an age-friendly work environment
- Seek out volunteering opportunities or join a community group
- Attend a course, learn a new skill or think about what skills you could teach others
- Make people feel welcome
- 'Talk up' the great things happening in your local community.

Theme 2: Being Better Informed and Tech Savvy

Our older residents are well informed and well-resourced as they age.

This theme focuses on the role of information and technology in ensuring people remain informed and connected as they grow older, with a focus on Council services, community services and supports, and local activities and events. It acknowledges that rapid changes in the way we communicate can create inequity for some older people who find it more difficult to use digital technologies. It aims to support older people who wish to digitally upskill and learn new technologies, while respecting the preferences of people who also prefer face to face and print communications.

Our community said “As I age, I would like to...

- keep learning and growing
- find out about new technology
- be able to stay in touch with friends and family wherever they are
- be able to easily find information about services
- be able to get services that help me to stay living in my own home
- be able to look after myself and stay independent
- to know what is happening in my local area
- to not miss out!”

Being Informed

Goal 2.1: Improve promotion of events, activities and programs for older residents

Goal 2.2: Enhance access to information about services and support

Communication and information shape our lives. They are at the core of everything we do and influence every decision we make. The ability to communicate and access information impacts our quality of life, our sense of belonging and empowers people to make decisions that will positively impact their situation and wellbeing.

Information enables people to fully participate in their local community, find out what's on, engage with activities and events, and access support in times of need. Being better informed is linked to keeping connected and engaged, and older people who can easily access information about services and programs are more likely to have their social and psychological needs met.

Making sure that information is easy to find, at the times when people need it most, is a challenge for both government and the community sector. To meet this challenge, there has been a shift towards using digital platforms such as webpages, apps and social media to communicate with, and provide information to, the community. Within the age care sector this has resulted in services such as My Age Care, the NDIS and Carers Gateway moving service access to 'online portals'.

The digital age and becoming more tech savvy

Goal 2.3: Develop skills and confidence to use technology

As we move into the 2020's, more and more information is primarily available online. There is an expectation that people will gain further information through electronic means rather than through personal contact. For some, the use of technology to communicate is a preferred method, but there are many people who did not learn or use digital technology within their early life and are now required to quickly adapt to a new way of communicating.

“Only 15% of Australians over 65 years accessed government services, or health and medical information via the internet (Roy Morgan, 2015). 54% of people over 65 years stated they were “somewhat” or “very dissatisfied” with the concept of interacting with government primarily by digital methods according to the Australian Government’s digital transformation office.” COTA, 2019

This has been particularly evident with the recent bushfire crisis and Coronavirus pandemic. Older people who were digitally connected were significantly advantaged, with access to emergency information, communication with family and friends, and contact with essential services all continuing online, while retaining physical distance, safe at home. But for those without access the Internet, these crises highlighted the ‘digital divide’ – those who have access to technology and the means to use it, and those who do not.

For the younger generation, born into this digital world, new skills are easily learnt. Many children have mastered the art of downloading Apps on their parent’s smartphone even before starting school. By the teenage years, many young people are more tech savvy than their parents or carers. However, learning new technologies later in life isn’t always child’s play and comes with a unique set of challenges. The right type of learning environment is required, with teachers who can adapt to the learning needs of individuals, building knowledge and confidence at a suitable pace.

Benefits of becoming digitally savvy

- Connecting with friends, family and community, near and far through Skype, Zoom and social media
- Better access to information about events and activities via online events calendars and advertising via social media
- Access to information and services from the comfort of your own home through online portals operated by My Aged Care, NDIS, Carers Gateway and other age care providers
- Easier access to information and services for those with mobility challenges, or those whose live in rural or remote communities

- New ways of accessing and navigating that support people to remain independent in their own home
- Access to the most up to date information in times of crisis such as bushfires or storms
- Increased access to information about health and wellbeing.

Age-friendly information and services

Goal 2.4: Provide age-friendly information and services

Whilst there are many benefits to the use of technology, this is not the only way to communicate. Many people prefer person-centred forms of communication that create opportunities for human interaction and conversation. There are also people who simply do not want to, or find it particularly challenging, to learn new technology later in life.

We need to ensure that everyone in the community has easy access to information. This requires not only working towards digital inclusion and supporting our older residents to digitally upskill if they desire, but also moving beyond the digital and providing information in a variety of forms that meet the preferences and needs of our local community and having this available in places frequented in older people's daily life. This includes adopting an age-friendly approach so all materials are easy to read and understand, assisting those with visual or hearing disabilities, for example, hearing loops, large-print and e-readers and audio formats; our services continue to be adapted and provided to support older people, for example continued provision a home library service; and our staff are skilled to assist older people, those with disabilities and/or dementia in accessing Council services.

What our older residents told us

- Strong communities always have a myriad of strong internal networks – places people turn for help, support and information which are often never formalised or structured. Our ageing community is no different, and improved access to information and knowing “what’s on” was a repeated topic throughout the engagement phase.
- Types of information sought include details about community events and what’s on, 50+ centre program and schedule, libraries and learning opportunities, staying fit and healthy, how to volunteer, transport and housing options, and how to access age care and independent living services and supports.
- The types of information that people require changes across different life stages. People entering retirement need information about what’s on, retiring well and financial advice. People ‘in the swing of retirement’ are seeking information on what’s on and forward planning. Those who require a higher

level of support need information on age care services, financial advice, supported accommodation or residential aged care.

- Many people are confused by the aged care system. They are unaware of the types of support that can be provided and how to access services that can support them to remain independent and age in place within their own home and community. 47% of survey respondents were not aware of My Aged Care or how to access it. Another 10% were not sure.
- People rarely begin to navigate the age care system before help is required. This creates the challenge of finding the right services at a time when people are feeling vulnerable and experiencing the stress of losing independence. We heard that more support is required to guide people through this transitional life stage and help people retain their independence.
- Many older people want to learn about the Internet. They want to be able to connect with family using social media, book a holiday online, order shopping or access services such as My Age Care, or even renew a passport.
- There is a growing number of older people using mobile technology such as smartphones and tablets. There are very limited opportunities to learn about how to use and get the most out of these devices. Older people would like support to learn how to use devices for both social connection and accessing the services they may require.
- Older people want free wi-fi and Internet access at community locations such as libraries and shopping centres to support older people who do not have the Internet at home.
- Research shows that a preference for hard copy or face to face information remains for many older people, with information available in a range of places that older people frequent in their daily lives. Meeting service providers in a face to face environment provides opportunities for older people to ask questions, build stronger relationships and better understanding. 39% of survey respondents wanted to receive information in non-digital formats.

Ways you can be better informed and tech savvy

- Request a digital or print copy of GOALL magazine
- Request a digital or print copy of the Central Coast Senior's Directory
- Stay informed about Council and community events by signing up to Council's Facebook, Twitter or Instagram page
- Visit your local 50+ centre or library and find out about the extensive range of services, programs and workshops provided to the community
- Challenge yourself to be more digitally savvy - sign up to computer course
- Learn about mobile technologies and devices such as smartphone, tablets and apps
- Build your skills online by completing a free course on the Australian Government's 'BeConnected' website

Theme 3: Staying Healthy and Active

Our older residents are encouraged to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle and can access health services

This theme focuses on the importance of health, fitness and wellbeing. It acknowledges that early health prevention and active lifestyles play a positive role in increasing the chance of staying healthy into later life. It aims to promote and increase access to health and wellbeing services and programs and provide community-based support for people living with chronic illness.

Our community said “As I age, I would like to...

- keep dancing, singing and moving
- stay happy and healthy
- enhance my wellbeing
- be more adventurous
- have outdoor exercise equipment that suites my fitness level
- have bush tracks and trail networks for walking and riding
- enjoy life to the fullest
- be kind to myself
- appreciate the little things
- always play with the grandkids
- for the wrinkles to be on the soles of my feet!”

Healthy and Active Ageing

Goal 3.1: Provide programs, activities and facilities that promote physical activity and mental wellbeing

Goal 3.2: Improve access to preventative health programs

Healthy and active ageing is about maintaining physical and mental wellbeing, a good quality of life, and a positive attitude towards ageing. Staying healthy and active into later life also helps to maintain independence and mobility, prevent disease and slow or reverse chronic illness. This empowers people to remain active participants in all aspects of community life, through all life stages.

The Central Coast provides many opportunities to participate in an active lifestyle, with the natural environment, open space and recreation facilities offering plentiful opportunities to get active and enjoy nature. Popular activities for older people locally include walking, golf, bowls, swimming, boating, tennis, cycling, mountain biking, gardening, dancing, singing and the arts.

Accessible green space provides an incentive for walking and cycling. There is evidence that contact with nature is valued very highly by older people, including

fresh air and sensory experience: sight, smell, touch and hearing. The most sought-after experiences are mainly enjoying the natural scenery, peace and quiet.

Natural spaces offering opportunities for relaxation and have also been shown to facilitate higher levels of social contact and social integration amongst different age groups. Community gardens, for example, provide opportunities for socialising with and learning from fellow gardeners and residents that may normally be unavailable. Volunteering in natural environments, such as land care, dune care tidy towns groups, may be another example of enhanced health and well-being made possible not only through contact with nature, but through the social connection that arises from working on a common community task in a local natural area.

There is also a strong relationship between good physical and mental health with older residents reporting that remaining physically active also kept the mind engaged, and an interest or hobby that requires mental input usually had a physical component.

There is also a strong association between the importance of remaining connected with community, friends and family and the maintenance of good health and wellbeing. Many older residents indicated that their involvement in community and sporting groups and volunteering activities provided them with opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and engagement, and these activities assisted them in maintaining their mental health.

Keeping mentally active was also identified as a key factor in maintaining health and wellbeing. Mental stimulation in the form of activities such as sudoku, crosswords, continuing to learn new skills and knowledge were considered important.

A focus on early intervention, prevention and health promotion is also key to support people to remain healthy and active into later life. Policies and programmes that promote mental health and social wellbeing are equally as important as programmes to improve physical activity and diet.

Lifestyle and diet play a large part in determining our level of health and wellbeing as we age. While our location and level of recreational opportunities assist in creating a positive environment in which to maintain an active lifestyle, diet is a more problematic issue somewhat dependent on the individual socio-economic circumstance.

Older residents are mindful of the need to monitor their diet, with affordable nutritious food being important for residents to age well. Those that had maintained a focus on their diet/lifestyle throughout their life were far better placed to continue with these good habits as they aged. Whilst others did encounter difficulty in attempting to counter bad habits that had accumulated through their working life and often the motivation to do something was only linked to an adverse health outcome. For many, living alone or on a fixed or low income, the temptation to save on food costs, reluctance to prepare fresh meals or reliance on cheap take away or packaged foods can lead to health problems regardless of exercise levels. There was an identified

need for healthy nutrition information including cooking on a budget and cooking for one.

High risk factors for chronic disease at an older age include smoking, high blood pressure, high body mass, physical inactivity, high cholesterol, alcohol, low fruit and vegetable consumption and illicit drugs. Did you know - 51% of Australians aged 50+ do less than 2 hours a week of exercise and just over a third (36%) do less than one hour of exercise per week. This is significantly under the recommended 30 mins of exercise per day. 72% of Australians aged 50+ rate their diets as healthy or very healthy⁹.

“Investment in healthy ageing activities reduces the demand on health services and increase the independence, dignity and participation of older Australians in society.”
COTA 2019

Benefits of exercise and fitness in later life

- Improved balance, strength, co-ordination, flexibility and endurance
- Positive impacts on mental health and cognitive function
- Increased levels of independence for longer
Increased wellbeing and participation
- Quicker recovery from illness
- Reduced risk of chronic disease
- Reduced risk of falls

Living with chronic illness

Goal 3.3: Support older residents living with a chronic illness

People may experience a range of health challenges as they age. However, with the right support and health management, this should not wholly define the person or their quality of life.

“Healthy Ageing is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives. Everybody can experience Healthy Ageing. Being free of disease or infirmity is not a requirement for Healthy Ageing as many older adults have one or more health conditions that, when well controlled, have little influence on their wellbeing.” World Health Organisation, 2019.

Some of the chronic conditions that become more common as people age include diabetes, cardiovascular disease, degenerative eyesight conditions, Parkinson's disease, osteoporosis and arthritis. Mental illness and mental health disorders such as schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and clinical depression are also prevalent in older people. However, it is the rising incidence of Dementia that is causing most

⁹ State of the Older Nation (2018) COTA

concern. 132,100 Australians were living with dementia in 2020¹⁰. Gosford, Terrigal and The Entrance are within the top 10 NSW communities with the highest estimated prevalence of dementia¹¹. The number of people living with dementia on the Central Coast is projected to increase by 300% from 4,735 people in 2011 to 14,310 people in 2050¹².

There are many ways in which family, friends, the community, Council and service providers can support people living with chronic illness and help to safeguard quality of life and limit the impact of the disease. Early diagnosis and intervention help people to better plan and make informed decisions about treatment and management. Supporting people to continue to lead healthy and active lifestyles, within an age and dementia friendly community can also improve the quality of life and wellbeing for those experiencing chronic illness.

The key to good mental health and cognition in older age

“Studies show that for treating mild-moderate depression, exercise can be as effective as talking therapy and medication.” Beyond Blue (2020)

- Keep active and eat well
- Relax and enjoy your hobbies
- Develop new skills and challenge your capabilities
- Volunteer or become active within your community
- Spend time with friends, loved ones and people you trust
- Reduce alcohol consumption and avoid illicit drug use
- Stop smoking
- Ask for help should you need it

Access to health and other support services

Goal 3.4: Advocate for and promote awareness of local health and support services

Health is the number one concern for older Australians¹³ and the top reason people gave for poor quality of life was health problems¹⁴. There will be increased pressure on the local health system as our population continues to age.

Access to affordable health and support services is important to assist older residents as they age. This includes better access to GPs, more doctors who bulk bill

¹⁰ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/dementia/data>

¹¹ <https://hneccphn.com.au/media/14550/hnecc-older-persons-health-profile-2018.pdf>

¹² Central Coast Primary Dementia Care Network (2011)

¹³ State of the Older Nation (2018) COTA

¹⁴ State of the Older Nation (2018) COTA

and access to local hospital, specialist and allied health services, home care and aged care assessments.

Whilst some residents stated that the Central Coast was a great place to live because of the proximity to and availability of hospital and medical services, some residents were not sure where to source correct information on what services are available. Many found it difficult to navigate the health care system with issues raised around complicated referral systems for hospital, aged care assessments, accessing allied health services, long waiting lists and discharge planning. These issues were also identified by service providers as current challenges.

Mobility and transport options did impact the ability of some older residents to access health care services and some older residents expressed a need for more diverse transport options to get to health services.

What our older residents told us

- Health and fitness activities are extremely important for older residents. Over 50% participate in sports like golf, tennis, lawn bowls, swimming or cycling at least once a week. Over 40% participate in fitness classes, like yoga, dancing or strength classes. Walking groups are also very popular with over 20% participating at least once a week.
- When asked what they would like to access that doesn't already exist in their community, the top 3 responses were fitness-related:
 1. bike paths and mountain bike trails
 2. footpaths, bush walking trails and walking groups
 3. more pools - ocean or indoor that are accessible and offer hydrotherapy
- Access to our natural areas was of key importance to many people. Physical barriers such as stairs without handrails, uneven pathways or no pathways, and steep inclines are a barrier to accessing and enjoying the natural environment for people as they age. Areas that were mentioned included beaches and waterways, lookouts and bush trails. Additionally, access to services such as toilets, seats and shade were raised as important infrastructure to experience and enjoy the natural environment.
- Baby boomers requested that more outdoor and sporting activities be offered within Council programs. Service providers also suggested that more 'Coastie' type activities could be offered, including activities such as fishing, boating and visiting the beach.
- Service providers noted the cost of health and fitness activities can be prohibitive and prevent people from participating. Low cost exercise and wellbeing activities were rated as the fourth most important action that 'Council could do better to support older people'.
- Lack of transport also prevented some people from attending health and fitness activities. When transport was an issue, people requested programs to be run from community locations closer to home.

- There is a need for access to information on how to stay healthy, illness prevention and nutrition.
- There is a need to better support older people's mental health, including during bereavement, with fitness, social connection and nutrition all recognised as factors that can contribute to better mental health.
- Nutritious, low costs meals in the social context of a 50+ Centres are highly valued by customers and service providers. As is the NSW Health falls prevention program.
- Aboriginal Medical Service are interested in early intervention programs that empower people to manage their own health before reaching a health crisis.
- There is a need to provide healthy and active ageing advice and programs that support the needs and preferences of older Aboriginal people and older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Ways you can remain healthy and active

- Get moving and exercise for 30 minutes a day
- Search for activities that you enjoy and match your fitness level
- Walk your dog every day
- Join a sporting group, exercise class or 50+ Centre fitness program
- Eat a balanced diet, low in saturated fats and sugar
- Enjoy the great outdoors and explore your own backyard
- Join a community environment group or a community garden
- Take family outings to natural areas
- Stop smoking and drink less alcohol
- Talk to your GP and have regular preventative health checks
- Instead of telling yourself you can't, tell yourself you can
- Think positively and have fun!

Theme 4: Age-friendly Places and Spaces

Our older residents feel welcome and can access public places and spaces, they can move easily and safely around the community and are supported to age in place

This theme focuses on accessible, well designed and safe public spaces usable by people of all ages, the availability of a range of transport options to ensure people can be mobile and remain connected and involved and that suitable housing is available for older people as they move through life stages.

Our community said “As I age, I would like to...

- be able to visit and join my family and friends in different places around the Coast
- obtain information on how to get around in the times I need to
- travel on buses and trains that I can afford regularly
- be able to travel to sporting and entertainment centres during the evening as well as the day
- go to town centres, walkways and parks and feel safe
- to be able to visit the natural reserves and coastal and bush walks to the same level as everyone else
- be able to park my car near the places I need to go”

Out and about in the public domain

Goal 4.1: Create an age-friendly and universally designed public domain which is welcoming, safe and accessible

The way in which towns, neighbourhoods and public places and spaces are designed and built can play a major role in enabling older people to age in place and remain active – both physically active and in their local communities. For example, being able to safely and easily go for a walk, having easy access to shops, civic, community and recreation facilities and health services and feeling safe all contribute to higher levels of wellbeing.

Age-friendly and well linked built environments can make neighbourhoods more liveable for all ages, reduce costs associated with health and aged care and yield a range of social and economic benefits by extending and expanding older residents’ contributions to community life.

It is important that public places are clean, accessible and have appropriate lighting, green spaces are well maintained and safe, outdoor seating and resting points are available, there are pedestrian friendly walkways, pavements are non-slip, public toilets are sufficient in number, roads are well designed with appropriate physical structures in place (such as lights, crossing, traffic islands) to ensure pedestrian safety and civic, community and leisure facilities are accessible.

Studies indicate that that older people are more likely than young people to be more fearful of crime and to consider some public spaces as unsafe or unwelcoming, even though they are in a lower risk category than other age groups. Research has also suggested that there is a relationship between anxiety about crime, community involvement and self-confidence. Those older people who are active and involved in their communities are least likely to be anxious about crime. Conversely, the more socially and physically isolated older people are from others, the more likely they are to lose confidence and trust and to withdraw further. Perceptions of safety can inhibit people's ability to participate in all aspects of community life.

Older people need to feel safe in their neighbourhoods and public spaces so they can continue to engage in community life. By adopting Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles we can ensure safer spaces are created when providing new/upgraded public spaces and places. Good street lighting, well maintained public spaces, parks and gardens and the condition of footpaths, bus stops and road conditions can contribute to older residents feeling safer in moving around their local areas.

Getting around

Goal 4.2: Enhance pedestrian and road safety and make it easier to get around

Goal 4.3: Improve access to accessible, safe and convenient transport and mobility options for older residents

Access to adequate, appropriate and affordable transport as well as supporting infrastructure is an important factor influencing positive ageing. Transport includes personal transport, public transport, community transport, taxis, walking, cycling and mobility aids.

Being able to get around is key to ensuring older people can maintain their daily independence, stay connected and be involved in the community. It enables people to maintain social contacts and participate in community life and access services and facilities that they require.

The World Health Organisation states that "age friendly" transport must be accessible, affordable, available, safe, comfortable, and with specialised support options provided for those that are frail and/or disabled. These same expectations are raised by older people on the Central Coast and reflected in local community-based transport solutions.

A large percentage of our local ageing population rely heavily on private motor vehicles to get around. Older residents expressed a need for increased available and accessible parking and drop off points at key locations as well as education to improve road safety awareness and skills, to retain confidence in driving and to using public transport along with cars. A primary concern of aged residents is retaining their driver's license, the loss which has a negative effect on independence and can contribute to a decline in overall health and wellbeing. For more isolated areas or where services are limited older residents faced choices between limited transport,

relying on other services or contemplating moving and leaving behind networks and community connections.

Older residents have stated that they need access to this infrastructure so that they can walk and ride safely, not only for exercise but also to move about in the community. Shared pathways and footpaths provide important links between transport, shops, services and activities and enable older residents to maintain social connections in their neighbourhood.

The increased use of mobility scooters allows people who are ageing or have chronic illness, injury or surgery to maintain their independence, shop independently, access services and social activities and visit family and friends. Such transport has provided a need for awareness and information regarding appropriate use and safety for riders and pedestrians as well as the provision of suitable infrastructure.

Somewhere to live

Goal 4.4: Facilitate and advocate for a range of appropriate and affordable housing options for older residents

For people in their older years, having a place to call home is as important as for any other age group, yet the options to live as desired can become increasingly difficult for many people as they age. This is due to any number of factors including changing lifestyle, financial situations, changes in relationships, family arrangements and vocation and changing health support and carer needs. The living arrangements of older people have a significant impact on their general health and wellbeing.

Despite a common belief nationally that older people live in retirement villages, most older people live in a private dwelling with their partner and the rates of home ownership amongst older people tend to be high. This is based on a need for long-term, stable housing, a need shared by diverse cultures where older people can play a critical role in keeping families together and providing care to grandchildren.

Overwhelmingly Central Coast older residents have expressed a preference to live in their own home and in familiar community surroundings for as long as possible, with location, amenity and sense of community considered of high importance.

Staying in their own home or “ageing-in-place” is a priority for many people as they age. Access to support in the home was identified as the preferred model of care for older residents to assist them to continue to live independently. Ageing-in-place can be complemented and extended by accessing a range of community support options and implementing universal design practices. Many retirement villages and residential aged care facilities also provide the opportunity to age-in-place.

The increase in the number of older residents ageing in place in their own homes has several implications for Council in terms of the planning and regulation of land use and development in relation to facilitating a mix of housing choices, seniors living development and affordable housing. An ageing population requires access to a

diversity of housing types for people to have a choice of housing that meets their housing needs.

Ageing in place also requires the provision of simpler and clearer information on the potential housing options of granny flats and secondary dwellings together with advice on how to adapt existing housing. The whole area of residential/retirement/serviced living options is considered complex and there is an ongoing need for older people and their families to access objective advice or information.

Whilst aged care is primarily the responsibility of Federal Government (such as via My Aged Care) Council still plays a role via strategic planning and development consent, advocating in this area for close to home options as well as ensuring that aged care housing is well designed and well located – either close to services and facilities and/or accessible via public transport. The integration of aged care housing into the local area both physically and socially is also important to support older people to remain active and connected and to avoid being socially isolated

Housing affordability has been identified as a priority concern by residents. Central Coast service providers identified a lack of accessible and affordable housing choices as a current challenge for some residents ageing well and highlighted the need for appropriate options for accommodation.

Council's response to the growing lack of affordable housing in the region, the 'Central Coast Affordable and Alternative Housing Strategy (2019)', aims to build a vision for a 'fair and inclusive region, where everyone has access to affordable and sustainable housing'. The Strategy makes the case for the provision of affordable housing via a wide range of housing products, tenure types and price point suitable to the different demographics of the community, including older residents.

What our older residents told us

- 63% of service providers thought Council should focus on an 'Age Friendly Community' to support positive ageing on the Central Coast
- The top 4 priorities for age friendly communities according to older people are:
 - Safer and joined up pathways in places that older people go
 - More frequent and flexible transport
 - Outdoor facilities like seats to rest on and more public toilets
 - Accessible council facilities and parking
- There were many comments received about footpaths, and mobility/disability access issues. The lack of footpaths and pathways as well as discontinuous pathways were a barrier to older people being out and about in their local community, as there was a perception that it was not safe to walk. Linked with the issue of pathways is fear of falling on uneven surfaces, lack of adequate street lighting, not enough seating to enable older residents to rest along the way and a lack of directional signage. Other issues raised related to pedestrian safety including being able to safely cross the road.

- Access and adequacy of public transport varied across the region, with some areas being well serviced and other areas having limited services and long travel times. Local consultation has also specifically identified bus and train timetabling, convenience, ability to easily access information, provision of bus shelters, lighting, lifts and parking at train stations and accessible buses as important.
- For those with walking and mobility difficulties parking can be an issue. There is an increased demand for both disabled parking spaces, “seniors” parking spaces and drop-off points.
- A desire for public spaces to be well maintained was strong as well as improvements to amenity, lighting, associated infrastructure and access.
- Older residents expressed a preference to live in their own home and in familiar community surroundings for as long as possible. There is a need to access support to assist with home and garden maintenance.
- Service providers identified a lack of accessible and affordable housing choices.
- Older residents asked for access to simpler and clearer information to explain different housing options.

Ways you can get around

- Look at local solutions to transport issues
- Volunteer as a driver for community transport
- Adopt a positive attitude to public transport
- Walk or cycle, including in social groups
- Car pool with neighbours and friends
- Attend a road safety education workshop
- Plan your trip via an online transport apps such as Citymapper, TripView or Live Traffic NSW

Ways you can manage your housing needs

- Plan well in advance
- Consider downsizing
- Consider home modifications
- Consider a location that is close to services and facilities
- Plan for a low maintenance garden
- Research options and discuss with your family
- Seek financial advice before making a decision

Measuring our Progress

The Positive Ageing Strategy Action Plan details the actions that Council will undertake in relation to the four themes and achieving our goals.

The Action Plan is aligned with Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework including the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans.

The Community Partnerships Unit are responsible for monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Action Plan. As part of this process, resources will be reviewed to ensure that actions can be successfully accomplished within allocated timeframes. For many of the actions, Council will also seek to develop partnerships with key agencies, service providers and the community.