



WARRINGAH COUNCIL'S AGEING STRATEGY

Living Well Warringah

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Vision

Experience the benefits of living, working and playing in Warringah as we age. More people will enjoy later life if:

- We all engage in active and rewarding lives and are valued members of the community
- We all make individual decisions about our wellbeing and future planning in adult life
- Our community and all levels of government respond effectively to the opportunities and challenges of people living longer

(Taken from NSW Ageing Strategy)

Introduction

As we live longer we increasingly consider what 'living well' means. It includes the social, spiritual and emotional dimensions of health, as well as the physical ones. It involves consideration of the environments in which we live and the services available to meet our needs. It recognises the opportunities we have to do the things that we want to do and how we contribute our knowledge and skills to the communities in which we live.

The principles of 'living well' support better communities for everyone. Safe, accessible and pleasant environments are more enjoyable for people of all ages and abilities. Connected communities enjoy better health and social outcomes. Inclusive practices allow businesses and community groups to thrive. Above all, harnessing the skills and experience of older people offers valuable intergenerational opportunities to strengthen and enrich the entire community.

The importance of 'living well' in Warringah is demonstrated in part by the development of this Ageing Strategy.



ROLE AND PURPOSE

In line with current national trends, both the number and proportion of older people living in Warringah is expected to increase dramatically. The Warringah Ageing Strategy will provide a framework for responding to the identified needs for Warringah over the ten years from 2013 - 2023. The strategy describes the priority areas that Council will focus on in order to deliver policies, projects, facilities and services which enhance the quality of life and wellbeing for older people.

The Warringah Ageing Strategy builds on the knowledge and experience that Council already has in meeting the needs of its older residents. Other needs have been identified through consultation with older people as important in supporting them to continue to live active and healthy lives.

It focuses on matters that Council can influence including; the provision of infrastructure, facilities and services; the planning and regulation of housing, neighbourhoods, town centres and public spaces; being a source of local information and; acting as an advocate on behalf of older members of the community. It also considers issues where council may lead or partner with other agencies and organisations to ensure a collaborative approach.

Fundamentally the strategy will become part of the framework for policy making and service development planning for Warringah Council. It will promote awareness of and, responsiveness to, the identified strategic objectives across all areas of Council's operations.

The strategy has been structured around five core themes which emerged from the consultation process.

1. Where we live
2. Getting out and about
3. Community involvement and lifelong learning
4. Healthy lifestyles
5. Access to care and support

Priority areas and strategic objectives are discussed on the following pages in relation to the above themes.

The Warringah Ageing Strategy is a living document that will be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects the priority areas most relevant to the community. It will continue to be informed by relevant State Government legislation and policy, as well as more local initiatives such as the findings of the Northern Sydney Ageing Strategy (currently in development by the Office for Ageing, Department of Family and Community Studies with proposed release in early 2014).

DEVELOPMENT

The development of this strategy has involved a multifaceted approach to research and data collection. It has included:

- A review of research about older people and ageing in Australia
- An analysis of census information about the older population of Warringah
- Consultation with older residents in Warringah (two public community forums, an online survey, and three focus groups with target audiences who are otherwise hard to reach; carers, Mandarin and Serbian speakers)
- A forum of service providers who work with older people in the community
- A review of existing policies, publications, programs and activities available for older people living in Warringah
- Extensive discussions with Council staff.



DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Where we are today

- In 2011 there were 21,750 residents aged 65+ in Warringah from a total population of 140,741. This is a substantial increase from 2006 when there was 20,280 people aged 65+.
- Compared to the rest of Sydney, the proportion of people aged 65+ is very high in Warringah. In 2011 the proportion of people aged 65+ in Warringah had grown to 15.4% of the population, compared with 12.7% for the rest of Sydney.
- The population of older people is not spread evenly across the local government area. Suburbs with the highest numbers of people aged 65+ are Dee Why, Narrabeen, Frenchs Forest, Belrose and Collaroy. This is partly attributed to retirement villages and nursing homes being located in these suburbs.
- Nearly 33% of older people living in Warringah have been born overseas. The largest number of people from a non-English speaking background come from Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and China.
- Compared to the rest of Sydney, older people in Warringah have higher rates of participation in the workforce, in volunteer work and in providing care for children or a person with a disability.

Where we are going

In line with the trends throughout the rest of Australia, over the next decade and more, the older population of Warringah is likely to:

- Include more people at different stages of ageing, from active seniors in their 50s and 60s, through to frail aged people in their 90s and beyond.
- Be increasingly diverse, with a wide range of financial circumstances, living arrangements, family situations, cultural backgrounds, life experiences and lifestyle preferences. This will challenge past stereotypes of older people as an homogenous group.
- Be increasingly made up of 'baby boomers', who will have different interests, expectations, preferences and attitudes towards growing older, and be more demanding of choice and quality services. Baby boomers can also expect an increasing user pays system in terms of service provision.
- Have an increasing focus on retirement as a time of 'lifestyle' and engagement, individual travel, fitness and volunteering activities.
- Be computer literate, have relatively high levels of education and have an interest and expectation that they will be involved in their community and making decisions around it.
- Be living alone, with less likelihood of support from family carers, due to more people being divorced or single as they enter old age, and increased mobility of family members.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN WARRINGAH

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Opportunities</i>
A large and reasonably affluent population of older people with high levels of education, high rates of home ownership and a wide range of skills and expertise to contribute to the community.	Recognising the different stages of ageing, and the needs and issues for the younger active. It is around the lifestyle needs of the well aged that local government is particularly well placed to respond.
High rates of volunteering and the provision of informal care by family and friends.	Responding to the demands for more Council services and facilities to keep pace with the growing numbers of older people.
Attractive physical geography, with the beaches, bushland and parks providing a multitude of recreation and lifestyle opportunities.	Ensuring that housing, town centres and local communities are age-friendly and support older people to live independently and get around easily.
A wide variety of social, leisure, learning and cultural opportunities.	Understanding the diverse needs of different groups of older people, and keeping in touch with changing expectations and preferences.
A strong network of community care services.	Balancing the needs of ageing people with those of other sections of the community.
Emerging number of older people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds	Understanding the diversity of CALD communities and responding in appropriate ways

Theme: WHERE WE LIVE

Council influences the location, supply and types of housing available through its planning and developmental control policies and its role in approving new development in line with State Government regulation. Information around accommodation options and support services for people living in their own home is a key role for Council. Council also supports the work of local agencies and service organisations that provide help to older people to remain living safely and independently in their own home through funding opportunities as part of Council's Community Development Grants Program and also rental subsidies for Council facilities.

1. Ageing in Place

"I have lived locally for 60 years and I wish to remain here as long as I am able"

Older people in Warringah echoed the national research findings that they want to stay living independently in their own home for as long as possible. Most people want to stay in the area they currently live in, close to familiar surroundings and established social networks.

However, many felt that their current home will not be suitable for the future. While large steep and bushy blocks with double storey homes have been great places to raise a family, many people recognise that they will not provide a suitable setting to "age in place". Some people may need to modify their existing home to make it more appropriate for their needs. This might mean making it more accessible with ramps and bathroom changes, removing hazards that may cause accidents, and seeking help with home and garden maintenance.

The NSW Ageing Strategy states that more than 75% of people 65+ and 50% of 80+ live independently without assistance of aged care services. However, many people do require help to stay living at home, and Warringah contains a large number of community care services to provide this support. These services are currently funded through the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) and provided through community based organisations (they are discussed in greater detail in Theme 5). However, from July 2015, HACC services will cease to exist in their current form, as a move towards individualised funding and consumer directed care will then be in place. While services to support people with home modifications and garden maintenance do exist in the area, they experience particularly high demand and some have long waiting lists. At the time of writing, it is unclear how Council services will fit into these aged care funding reforms.

Strategic Objective 1.1

Our objective is that all residents will have access to community education to help them plan for their retirement and future

Strategic Objective 1.2

Our objective is that barriers and gaps in service provision that support residents to live independently in their own homes will be removed

Strategic Objective 1.3

Our objective is that additional support services will be provided by State and Federal Government for all people requiring support at home as they age

Strategic Objective 1.4

Our objective is that every resident who needs it will have easy access to community information on support services available to assist older people to remain living in their own home

Theme: WHERE WE LIVE

2. Housing Choice

“There does not appear to be enough suitable accommodation to keep ageing people in their existing neighbourhoods.”

Meeting the varied needs of older people requires that a range of housing is available. However like much of suburban Sydney, over 60% of homes in Warringah are detached family houses, mostly on relatively large blocks. While in recent years there has been an increase in the construction of apartments in some parts of Warringah, overall there is a paucity of smaller, medium density forms of housing located close to transport, shops and services. This means there is limited choice for those wanting to downsize or move to more suitably located housing.

Older people in Warringah felt that future development needed to include more housing that is:

- Compact, on smaller blocks, with courtyard gardens
- Single storey with level access
- Adaptable and accessible, with no stairs, wide doorways, and bathrooms that can be used by people with mobility aids
- Close to neighbourhood shops and services, but away from main roads.

Particular needs were identified for options such as granny flats and dual occupancies so that older people can live independently with families close by.

While government policy will increasingly focus on supporting older people to remain living at home, there will still be a need for some people to move into residential care facilities, where care can be provided in association with accommodation.

Warringah also contains both large and smaller retirement villages. However some have been built on the urban fringe and do not provide convenient access to shops, services and public transport.

Strategic Objective 2.1

Our objective is that all residents who need it will have easy access to information on available housing options that allow them to live independently

Strategic Objective 2.2

Our objective is that more housing options will be available for those that want to live independently and age in place

3. Housing Affordability

"We live in a multi-level house and would like a single level, but finding something on a single level that is affordable for us is a problem."

Most older people in Warringah own their own home, providing them with a substantial asset which can be used to move house or buy into a retirement village or aged care facility as their needs change. Home ownership also means low housing costs for people on limited incomes, many of whom can be described as asset rich but income poor.

In contrast, a small proportion of older people who are renters experience high housing costs and low incomes and lack choices to move or modify their homes as their accommodation needs change.

The NSW Ageing Strategy anticipates that in NSW the number of low-income private renters 65+ will increase by 115% by 2026, and that housing affordability is a growing issue.

Housing affordability in Warringah is a common concern as downsizing to newer accommodation with access to services and facilities can cost nearly as much, and sometimes more, than can be realised through the sale of an older family home in a fringe location. The lack of affordable housing options suited to the needs of older people may force them to move out of Warringah to find the homes they need, yet most want to stay in their current neighbourhood.

High land values and the costs of development also create significant issues in terms of limited housing for key workers who provide care and support for older people.

Strategic Objective 3.1

Our objective is that all residents will have access to affordable suitable housing as they age

Theme: GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

Council has a role in providing programs and strategies to improve the ease with which people get around in Warringah, including those associated with footpaths, roads, public transport and bus stops. Council is also responsible for improving the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure, and the planning and regulation of public places and town centres.

4. Public Transport

"We need adequate public transport, especially during the day and outside peak hours."

Public transport in Warringah is provided by two bus operators, Sydney Buses operating in the eastern part of the local government area (LGA) and Forest Coach Lines in the western part. Bus services tend to focus on peak hour services and the main north-south and east-west corridors linking with centres of employment. Many people do not live within walking distance of bus services, and this situation is made worse by the hilly terrain and extent of outlying residential areas away from the main routes.

Many factors are contributing to more older people wanting to use public transport, such as increasing petrol prices and changes to the legislation around older drivers. Older people reported that a number of the places they want to go regularly are not serviced by public transport. Additionally, the lack of services linking residential areas to local shops is a particular problem.

A significant proportion, but not all buses are wheelchair accessible. Further issues were raised in consultations around the frequency and location of bus stops, which sometimes result in unnecessarily long walks, or unsafe crossing conditions. A need for more bus shelters and seating was also identified.

Strategic Objective 4.1

Our objective is that all older residents who are unable to drive will have access to safe, usable, convenient public transport to go to most places they need to go to live well



5. Community Transport

“Requests from residents are ever increasing for everyday assistance with shopping, banking, bill paying and transport.”

Warringah residents have access to community transport through two services, Easy Transport Manly Warringah Pittwater and Manly Warringah Pittwater Community Aid who provide social support alongside transport assistance.

These services target frail older people, people with disabilities, carers and people on the northern beaches who are transport disadvantaged. They are well utilised and provide transport for shopping trips, mystery drives, medical, hospital and social appointments, and a shuttle service to Royal North Shore, Mona Vale and Manly Hospitals. Once the new Frenchs Forest Hospital development is complete (due to open in 2018), it is anticipated that a similar shuttle service will commence, and Council would support this initiative.

Strategic Objective 5.1

Our objective is that where cars or public transport are not available, older residents will have access to a range of community transport options to get them to the places they need to go to live well

Theme: GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

6. Footpaths

"We need non-slip and even surfaces on footpaths."

Council has a commitment to providing high quality pedestrian facilities for its residents and encouraging walking as a sustainable mode of transport. However for a well established urban area, Warringah does not have an extensive network of footpaths and there are considerable parts of the LGA with no or inadequate footpaths.

Lack of footpaths and hazards associated with uneven, narrow, damaged or overgrown footpaths were the issues most frequently raised by older people in the consultations for this strategy. Inappropriate footpaths are a major deterrent for older people who want to stay active, involved and connected to their local community.

While Council policy has been to increase the provision of shared paths to encourage cycling, many older pedestrians reported that they feel unsafe on paths shared with cyclists.

Council has prepared a Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) to improve pedestrian access throughout Warringah, provide a safe road environment and ensure a coordinated response to transport planning. The plan identifies improvements to be made in 20 focus areas that have high levels of pedestrian activity (such as town and local shopping centres), as well as pedestrian links to community facilities, workplaces, beaches, parks and recreational routes. Older people are one of the special user groups whose needs have been taken into account in developing the Plan.

Strategic Objective 6.1

Our objective is that older residents will have safe, usable footpaths to encourage walking where possible

Strategic Objective 6.2

Our objective is that older residents will have information about pedestrian and road safety to ensure that they can use existing roads and footpaths safely

7. Accessible public places and facilities

“Provide safe and appropriately designed places.”

Many of the Council facilities in Warringah were built before the introduction of disability access standards. Updating of facilities to bring them into line with current standards is ongoing.

Older residents would like more seats (with back support) in shopping centres, parks, bus stops and other public places. A need for more and better located disabled car parks and public toilets was also identified.

Strategic Objective 7.1

Our objective is that Council’s public facilities will be usable and accessible for older and less mobile residents

Theme: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Council's role in supporting meaningful participation and social connectedness is largely that of facilitating and supporting links between older people and the programs and activities that are available to them with in Warringah (or in neighbouring areas).

Council does this through:

- An extensive Seniors Week program which encourages older people to learn about what is available and to sample activities and programs
- Providing information and referral through Council staff, and various brochures and publications including the Services, Activities and Housing Directory for Seniors
- Hosting forums on issues of relevance to older people and working with service providers and community groups to fill identified gaps
- Supporting Community Connect Northern Beaches to provide volunteer coordination and promotion services.

Council also provides places where people can meet and be involved in a group or activity. Council's senior citizen centres and community facilities, as well as church halls, school venues and outdoor areas are used by community groups offering a wide range of classes and activities teaching new skills, from crocheting and mah-jong to carpentry and genealogy. The University of the Third Age (U3A), Dee Why School for Seniors and Australian Seniors Computer Clubs are particularly popular in Warringah.



8. Social Isolation

"There are indeed many opportunities for older people in Warringah, but how Council and other concerned citizens can better get the message across to those that need it and who are isolated is something that has worried me for a long time."

The number of lone person households in Warringah continues to rise as the population ages. People are more likely to live alone in their 80s and 90s than they are when they are younger – often following the loss of their life partner. Warringah also has a high number of older people who are family carers. The burdens of caring for a loved one can be a significant barrier to social participation. Both carers and older people who live alone are at significant risk of becoming socially isolated.

Research from a study into social isolation on the northern beaches in 2011 found that 39% of older people across the Manly, Warringah and Pittwater LGAs wanted to have more social participation than they currently had. About 20% of respondents did not regularly access any kind of group or social activity.

Social isolation has adverse impacts on people's mental health, with feelings of loneliness and exclusion often associated with depression and anxiety for older people. Fearfulness, perceived vulnerability, and reluctance to leave the home can compound isolation and lead to a spiral of inactivity and declining mental and physical health.

Consultations revealed that while there are numerous opportunities for leisure, recreation, learning, socialising and health and fitness improvement in Warringah, many people simply are unaware about what is available. Council has a commitment to reducing social isolation and sees information provision and community education as fundamental in this plight. It also recognises that people access information in different ways, so clear and consistent information needs to be available through a range of networks.

Strategic Objective 8.1

Our objective is to reduce social isolation in our community

Theme: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

9. Work and Volunteering

"Many people want to make a worthwhile contribution no matter how old they are."

For participation in the community to be meaningful, it must allow older people to use their skills and experience.

The baby boomers in particular are likely to want to continue with paid employment longer, at least on a part-time basis. Many baby boomers have been active in a range of areas throughout their lives and will expect to continue to do this as they get older, perhaps combining these expectations with increased responsibilities as grandparents. This provides a strong basis for initiatives that celebrate and harness the knowledge and experience of older people, such as volunteering and mentoring programs.

Council directly supports volunteering opportunities through several of its programs, including bush regeneration and the Australia Day Big Breakfast.

Warringah Council seeks to be a leader in demonstrating the value that older people can bring to communities and business. Council's own employment practices are flexible, with capacity for part time and pre-retirement job sharing, a caring policy and other factors which contribute to making Council an attractive place for older people to work.

Council's consultation however, still identified a shortage of work opportunities and discrimination against older people who wish to find paid employment, and identified additional opportunities for Council to demonstrate good practice in its own employment policies, as well as to lobby the State and Federal governments on behalf of residents who are experiencing discrimination.

Council's commitment to providing opportunities for community involvement in Council decision making is underpinned by its Community Engagement Policy. Council is in the process of developing a Community Engagement Register which will allow people to identify subject areas or individual issues on which they wish to be kept informed and involved.

Many older people participate in Council's existing Community Committees and Strategic Reference Groups; these mechanisms are currently under review to identify better ways for older people to provide input on issues that are of interest to them.

Strategic Objective 9.1

Our objective is to increase the rates of volunteering in Warringah

Strategic Objective 9.2

Our objective is to increase the opportunities for older people to participate in the workforce

Strategic Objective 9.3

Our objective is that older residents are more valued for their wisdom and experience by the broader community and are offered increased opportunities to make a contribution to society

10. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

“Many seniors have never had experience with computers and I think library staff could assist with this.”

The importance of ICT in helping older people stay connected to family and friends who do not live nearby was widely reported in consultations. ICT also provides opportunities for older people to mitigate issues with mobility or accessibility.

It is worthwhile noting that not all older people have access to ICT in their homes, and that libraries have an important role in facilitating access, providing support, and offering face to face social interaction.

Council’s library services include a home library service for those who are unable to leave the home. They also have a wide range of programs which support the library as a social gathering place, including author talks, book clubs, literary lunches, family history meetings, history, heritage walks and lifestyle talks (diet, heart and exercise information).

Strategic Objective 10.1

Our objective is that all older residents will have access to ICT that helps them to live well including appropriate assistance and training

Theme: HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Many people chose to live in Warringah specifically for the recreation opportunities and healthy lifestyle which its beaches, bushland, parks and foreshores offer. Council's role in relation to supporting healthy lifestyles is primarily around ensuring that the spaces and facilities it manages support the recreational needs of the entire community. Warringah Council's 2009 Recreation Strategy describes this in more detail and includes a commitment to "recognising and continuing to support the high levels of participation of all ages and abilities by providing accessible infrastructure, programs and services".

11. Physical Activity

"There is a good selection of healthy lifestyle choices in the area, but again it may be difficult for some people to get to them."

Warringah's residents participate in sporting and recreational activities at rates well above state and national averages. Physical activity can have many benefits for emotional and physical wellbeing. Good nutrition, strong bones and muscles, and good reflexes all reduce the risk of falls and associated injuries. Participation in exercise reduces the risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, arthritis, diabetes and depression, and many other chronic conditions which become more likely as people get older.

In consultations, walking was identified as the key means of staying active, so having good footpaths and public transport to encourage walking were noted as particularly important. Access to walking trails around headlands and waterways and through bushland was also highly valued.

Strategic Objective 11.1

Our objective is to increase the participation rate of Warringah residents in physical activity by 30% to help them to live well



12. Organised Activities

"It is good to have social activities, but include others in the community. It isolates older people by just restricting activities by age."

Some people love to be active, while others enjoy more gentle activities. The social contact and mental stimulation of being active contributes to better health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Consultations clearly identified the need for a range of different levels and types of activities for older people to support differences in personal choice and ability. Older people had a range of experiences of participation in organised activities, and it was agreed that options must be available for those who are less interested in joining teams or groups.

Participants in consultations who were themselves involved with running community groups, as well as those who attended them, noted the significant burden of costs associated with insurance, venue hire, and administration.

People reported that many groups were too expensive, especially those that required an ongoing commitment to a program of activities, not all of which an older person may be able to attend.

Strategic Objective 12.1

Our objective is to increase participation of older people in organised activities that promote healthy lifestyles and social connection by 30%

Theme: ACCESS TO CARE AND SUPPORT

Residents of Warringah have good access to primary health care and hospital services, and a strong network of local community aged care providers. Council's main role in helping people access care and support is through providing information and referral services. Council also acts as an advocate for older people living in Warringah by constantly assessing needs and lobbying the State and Federal government to ensure that services are adequate and available in the area.

Strategic Objective 13.1

Our objective is that all older residents will have access to information that helps to support them to live well

13. Information provision

"Put information in places that older people frequent, for example pharmacies, community centres."

Knowing how to access the necessary health and care services can lead to confidence and informed decision making to assist people living at home to be active and independent. While many participants in the consultations identified Council as a source of possible information and assistance to access services, older people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities were more likely to identify family and friends as potential sources of information and practical support. Additionally, many older people were simply unaware of the range of services available to support them.

Recent publications, including the 2012-13 Services, Activities and Housing Directory for Seniors which was developed in partnership with Pittwater and Manly Councils, have been well received by the community. Information events held in libraries, and talks at clubs and RSLs have also been popular.

14. Home and Community Care (HACC) and other services

“Assistance to stay in the family home is the greatest need as without access to help when required the only long term option is to move into some type of aged care facility.”

From 2012, the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility for all aged care services, including the Home and Community Care (HACC) program which is the principle source of support for older people who wish to continue to live independently in their own homes. Services provided through the HACC program include transport, personal care, domestic assistance, meal services and home maintenance and modification services.

No major changes are expected to the basic support services, however the changed funding arrangements should make it easier for service providers to offer a range of both user pays and government supported services.

In Warringah, many older people live in large homes with gardens, so a key need was for lawn mowing and services to assist people to develop low maintenance gardens. In 2011, 48% of older people living in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater accessed some form of in-home support. In consultations, older people who had experience of being family carers had greatly valued the services that they had accessed to assist with the responsibilities of caring, particularly the informal networks of social support. Carers also described the need for general services, such as exercise groups or domestic assistance services to respond flexibly to the unpredictable demands of being a carer.

As in many other areas of Sydney which have significant proportions of older people, there is more demand than supply for affordable podiatry and dental services, and for GPs who are prepared to conduct home visits. When arrangements for the new Sydney North Shore and Beaches Medicare Local are confirmed, it will have responsibility for coordination of primary health care services and Council will be able to work with it to meet these gaps.

Strategic Objective 14.1

Our objective is that all older residents will have access to affordable care and support when they need it