



Colac Otway
SHIRE



Colac Otway Shire Council
Positive Ageing Ambassadors Toolkit
(an age-friendly resource)



Introduction & Contents



INTRODUCTION

The Positive Ageing Ambassador Project was undertaken with State Government funding through the Improved Liveability for Older people (ILOP) project and support from the MAV.

The Positive Ageing Ambassador Project identified a range of ongoing options for older people to be involved in governance, advocacy, advisory and community development roles. This highly successful project provides valuable learnings to be shared with councils and older people.

This document presents a number of resources including considerations and templates which have been designed to encourage communities to access the skills, experiences and energy of older people in creating age-friendly communities.

The benefit of this project to Council was that it showed in very real terms how older people within their communities can lead conversations, advocate for change, and inform Council on the local needs of our ageing communities.

Their pride and passion in the role of being an Ambassador was palpable and infectious to Councillors, council staff and the communities they supported.

It is important that the role of the Positive Ageing Ambassador continues within Council into the future in a similar Advisory and Consultative approach with their community peers.

Colac Otway Shire would like to acknowledge the funding support from the Department of Health and Human Services and the ongoing support and encouragement from the Municipal Association of Victoria.

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Note: all references marked (1) in the Appendix refer to the **World Health Organisation, *Global age-friendly cities: a guide (2007)***



Positive Ageing... the age to be...valued, involved, productive, active, consumer wise, cared for...

Project snapshot

Colac Otway Shire's Positive Ageing Ambassadors

PROJECT

The Colac Otway Shire recruited 12 older people from townships within the shire to become Positive Ageing Ambassadors. Trained by Council in a number of workshops the Ambassadors were skilled-up to talk with their neighbours and the wider community on how best to develop a range of projects to benefit older people. Ambassadors were each allocated an amount of \$3,000 to develop local projects in partnership with their communities.

AIM

To develop older people as local leaders in their towns and to maximize the involvement of older people in generating local projects. Ambassadors, each in partnership with a community organisation, worked within their communities to develop projects that would improve the liveability of their town for older people.

PROCESS

With the support of a skilled project worker the Ambassadors facilitated a series of local discussions, had conversations and conducted interviews in their towns to generate community-based ideas to improve life for older people.

They became the conduit between their communities and Council. The process built confidence that the voice of older people was being heard and responded to, and built the confidence of the Ambassadors as community leaders. The Ambassadors provided a catalyst for communities to activate their own projects which were all peer reviewed prior to approval.

ACHIEVEMENT

Older people were trained and skilled to become community leaders and to provide advice to Council on ageing issues. The project saw priority local projects developed including: the Women's Art Studio Proposal and SHARPS (Social Healthy Active Resilient Productive Seniors) Program; furthered the Multi Use Recreational Facility concept at Wye River; supported local historical events and an intergenerational schools program; installed new public seating in Colac and Apollo Bay; initiated first aid training; and offered information and social inclusion programs.



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Project snapshot

BENEFITS

The project encouraged a new approach to older people participating in community life. Ambassadors developed confidence and respect as they were supported and encouraged in their leadership roles. They became a focus for older people in their communities and developed skills in consultation processes.

Council benefited by integrating this program with its Positive Ageing Strategy, Transport Connections Strategy, Active Transport Strategy and various other initiatives such as its Health and Wellbeing Plan. Social capital can be hard to measure but there was substantial gain made through the relationships created in the engagement process. The projects also increased Council awareness of how to improve the liveability of small rural communities for older people.

WHAT IS THE ONGOING ROLE OF THE AMBASSADORS?

The Ambassadors continue to meet on a regular basis and discuss issues that impact on older people in the community. During these meetings the Colac Otway Shires' Manager of Community Services and the Coordinator of OPASS (Older Persons and Ability Support Services) attend to discuss new issues, answer queries and support the Ambassadors initiatives being included into Council activities.

The Ambassadors have provided a significant contribution to the Seniors Week activities within their respective townships. These have fostered socialising, participation and focusing on the narrative of older people in storytelling.

The Ambassadors have met with Councillors on a number of occasions around issues that have an impact on older people. Although not a formal process, there is considerable goodwill and a recognition of the Ambassadors recent achievements and forward thinking ideas.

CHALLENGES

It is still the intention of Council to formalise the Ambassadors into a Advisory Body to Council. To achieve this we are currently working on the development of a new Council Plan; community input into the development of this plan; and a new process of supporting the Ambassadors in being an integral part of this journey.

A number of projects that the Ambassadors were involved with required support from Council's infrastructure unit. This included the installation of new seating for older people in strategic locations. This was not achieved in a transparent, timely or appropriate manner which created frustrations and embarrassment within these projects for Ambassadors, the project worker and Council's community services officers.

Unfortunately, over the last few months, the number of Ambassadors has diminished. It is now necessary to review their role and advertise for new Ambassadors. We will be utilising some of the material in this Toolkit to help us advertising for new Ambassadors.

"IOP provided Ambassadors with the opportunity to have a key role in community, develop skills and confidences and the personal journey for some individuals has been the gold of the project".

"Local people are the experts in their own lives. Older people are not a homogenous group they represent a diverse range of interests, abilities, insights, life stories and wisdom and have the solutions to what will most benefit them. By involving older people actively in projects you can multiply the outcomes—achieve much more than a project worker trying to achieve the same outcomes. Greater outcomes can be achieved by Council, project partners and community partners developing coordinated responses to positive ageing".

Project Manager

How the project came about

Embedding priorities of older people into community planning and development

POSITIVE AGEING STRATEGY PROCESS

This project was to engage, support and empower representative older members from distinct communities to make a difference by implementing positive ageing strategies.

- Engage - Expressions of Interest were extended to older people throughout the shire to be part of a team of Ambassadors that would work together to improve the liveability of older people within distinct communities.
- Support - Ambassadors were trained and skilled in a number of topics including leadership, community engagement, community surveying and project management/delivery.
- Empower - Each Ambassador was eligible to receive a \$3,000 budget to implement a project identified within their community. These budgets were granted by the other Ambassadors provided there was evidence of community surveying and support for the project.

WHY AMBASSADORS AND NOT ANOTHER APPROACH?

The decision to use Ambassadors was made following a number of considerations around the intent of the project.

Colac Otway Shire has a number of small towns which have varied infrastructure, transport options, meeting places, and needs/issues for older people. It was thought that around 12 Ambassadors would be needed to represent each town or district. As an Ambassador they became the permanent and easily identified representative of that town or district.



Sherryl Smith,
Wye River Ambassador

"The Positive Ageing Ambassador program was an invaluable resource in the development of the Colac Otway Shire 2013-2013 Active Transport Strategy."

"Engaging with the Ambassadors enabled Council to tap into a wealth of knowledge within the local community by connecting with older adults and exploring their concerns."

"Ambassador participation in a walkability audit was indispensable in highlighting issues specific to the improved health and physical activity of older adults, such as the need for connected footpaths for safer travel and increased seating requirements."

"This excellent partnership program provided an opportunity for senior community members to provide their responses directly to Council through co-operation, participation and knowledge sharing which ultimately benefits the entire community."

Jodie Fincham, Recreation and Events Coordinator, Colac Otway Shire Council

"Having the Positive Ageing Ambassador Program gives Council the opportunity to talk to people, we have the opportunity to have a forum, a conversation around how our central business district can be developed, how paths can be planned, how seats, how concerts, how events, how programs can be developed with people at the centre of decision making."

"Instead of council making decisions at the start, people are there from day one working through the issues, working through a common understanding of what the needs are and looking at a common direction of how to get to a great outcome".

Greg Fletcher, Manager Community Services, Colac Otway Shire Council

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How the project worked

What does a Positive Ageing Ambassador do?

- Participates in training sessions to ensure they have the understanding and skills around community engagement
- Surveys older members of the community to determine needs through an asset based community development framework
- Advocates for the priorities of local older people and communities to local and state government.
- Consults with individuals and groups; develops partnerships in the community and initiates and actions projects which will increase the 'age friendliness' of the local community
- Collects local information around needs, opportunities and expanding on the things that work well within their respective communities
- Actively participates within a team of place based Ambassadors that support, critique and empower each other
- Meets and discusses their findings and thoughts with the other Ambassadors in an attempt to come to a great solution or outcome
- Manages the delivery of an approved project, with support from the project worker, to provide a positive ageing outcome within their community
- Talks with Councillors, community and at conferences on the purpose and function of local area Ambassadors



**Lyn Foster,
Ambassador**

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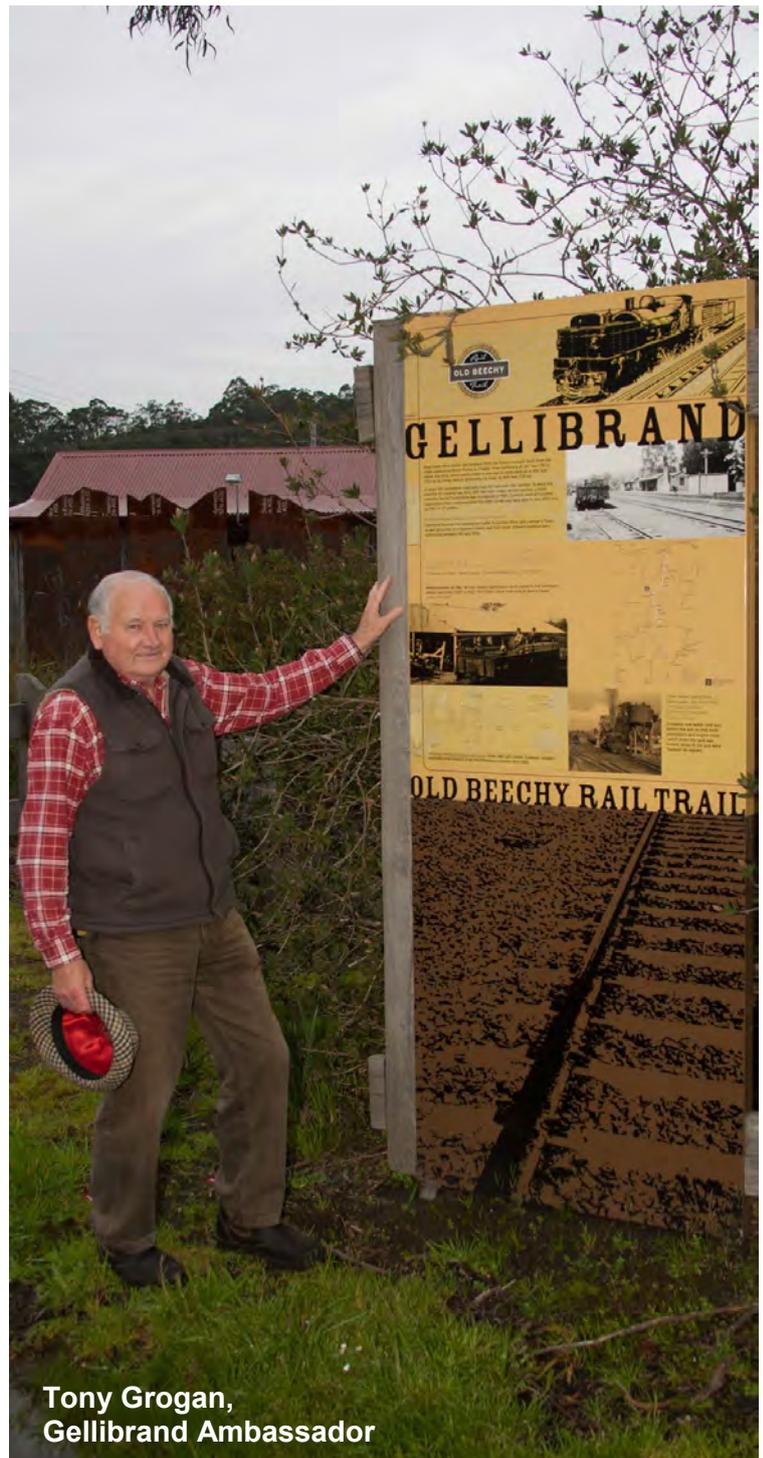
How the project worked

Key elements leading to success of the Positive Ageing Ambassador Program approach

Below are key elements that need to be considered and replicated within a Positive Ageing Ambassador approach.

- Strong links to, and a clear understanding by, Council senior staff of the Positive Ageing Ambassador approach to ensure that timely and appropriate support is provided
- Using an asset based community development framework
- Providing funds to employ a community development project worker
- A recruitment process for Ambassadors based upon desire to participate
- An overnight Ambassador retreat to kickstart the program
- Regular Ambassador workshops and gatherings to develop skills, exchange ideas and develop networks
- A funding allocation for each Ambassador to develop an age-friendly project within their local community
- Processes established for Ambassadors to endorse projects and funding allocations
- Partnering and linking with local, state and federal strategies and initiatives.

Some of these elements are explored in more detail in the following pages.



**Tony Grogan,
Gellibrand Ambassador**

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How the project worked

Using an Asset Based Community Development framework to support the initiative

An Asset Based Community Development Approach focuses on the strengths in people and communities, gets people having conversations, connects resources and builds networks and looks for what works and what we should do more of.

***It is not about restating issues...
it is about exploring what might work.***

- Looking for new ways to work together
- Working with strengths
- Challenging assumptions
- Action research
- Innovating
- Connecting resources
- Empowering people

Each community has a unique set of skills and resources from which to develop a response to creating Age-Friendly Communities.

In essence, this means finding what people enjoy doing, what is working well in the community and how it can be improved.

The postcard initiative mentioned on page 19 could be used by other Councils to commence on Asset Based Community Development Approach.

“The Ambassador Model works from the bottom up.”

“Seeking what the community needs rather than telling it what it needs and I see it as the only way to go for the future.”

“Because for more and more of us of my age and older we are very much about having a say in how we do things.”

“So I believe that consulting for older people is very important.”

“And we won’t be accepting being told what to do, to be asked how we want to run things is important.”

“The Ambassador program of having someone who’ll organize and seek out opinions and then have a link to a local council is a fabulous step.”

“It is having that intermediary who has an interest in asking rather than telling, I think it is a program that will work.”

Helen Pini, Apollo Bay Ambassador



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Consider the resources required

When planning and implementing a Positive Ageing Ambassador project it is necessary to consider the people and funding resources required to support the Ambassadors to talk and work within their communities.

It became obvious early within the project that a considerable amount of time discussing issues and concepts, and training and developing skills within the Ambassadors was needed. Below are a number of questions we asked ourselves at the beginning and during the project.

COUNCIL OFFICERS

- Are one or more officers required to coordinate and support the Ambassadors?
- Can the role be incorporated into an existing role?
- What skills are required?
- What role do they play?
- What is the time commitment?

ACCESS TO COUNCIL STAFF

- Do the Ambassadors require access to Council staff?
- At what level?
- How is this managed?
- How are disputes settled?
- What role do Councillors play?

ONGOING COMMITMENT

- What is the ongoing financial resource commitment from Council?
- Is the Ambassador project sustainable in the long term?
- How can the Ambassador project be included into the ongoing mainstream functions of Council?

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- What financial resources are required?
- Do the Ambassadors need access to money for the delivery of their projects?
- Could it be done without money for projects?



Jenny Lang,
Beac/Cressy Ambassador

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How did we recruit Ambassadors?

The Positive Ageing Ambassador recruitment process is based upon a desire to participate and a commitment to the role and project activities

The Ambassadors are as diverse in their experiences, skills and stories as the communities and landscapes of the Colac Otway Shire.

The key selection criteria were based upon a desire to participate and a commitment to the role and project activities. The opportunity was promoted through the local media and local networks. Some Ambassadors self-nominated and others were recommended by other key partners in the project.

A major benefit of this approach was the diversity of participant's skills, experiences and perspectives which meant we were hearing from all sorts of older people from the range of smaller and very diverse communities of the Colac Otway Shire.

The approach allowed people to participate and feel what they bring to the table was valued and that they are able to contribute in a meaningful way.

The individual networks of Ambassadors and ILOP partner organisations when combined provides a comprehensive engagement network across the Colac Otway Shire.

THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST PROCESS

Advertisements were placed in local papers and community news sheets. A copy of the advertisement and Expression of Interest Form are provided on pages 11 and 12.

To increase the opportunity to reach potential Ambassadors we met with a number of agencies within the Shire including health services, organisations that supported the elderly, U3A, the RSL, and seniors clubs.

We were looking for place based representation across the municipality and were hopeful for between 8 and 12 Ambassadors.

ASSESSMENT OF AMBASSADORS

There were 13 Expression of Interest forms submitted from older people who, fortunately, lived in different communities throughout the Shire. They had very personal reasons to apply to be part of the Ambassador project.

The approach that was used to identify suitable Ambassadors was very much focused on their willingness to attend an overnight retreat and how they self-assessed their interest and capacity to undertake training and work as a team.

Having just embarked on retirement and working out what that means, what could be better than getting involved in a project about Improving the Liveability of Older People?"

Jenny Lang, Beeac/Cressy Ambassador

"I wanted to participate because I am one of the older people. I am lucky because I am strong and healthy and so many others need help. I have the time and interest in people to do that."

Betty Harris, Colac Ambassador

How did we recruit Ambassadors?

Colac Otway Shire Positive Ageing Ambassadors Program

Expression of interest form

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Colac Otway Positive Ageing Ambassadors Program.

We are looking forward to forming our team of Ambassadors and working to improve the liveability of older people within our communities.

We will be forming a diverse team of Ambassadors who live in different townships within the Colac Otway Shire; and have a wide range of skills, ideas and interests.

The most important thing is that Ambassadors are committed to hearing the views and ideas of older people within their community and willing to share their skills in developing a project that reflects local priorities.

The Ambassador Program has three stages between July 2012 and August 2013 and we ask that you consider the time commitment involved and your ability to:

- Attend the overnight retreat,
- Attend the workshop/community consultation sessions
- Develop a project with the assistance and mentoring of a local community or service organisation.

Ambassador Projects will commence from November 2012

It is anticipated that an average of 6 hours per fortnight will be invested by Ambassadors for the duration of the Positive Ageing Ambassadors Program.

All costs associated with participating in the program will be covered and each participant will be allocated funding to assist with developing their Ambassador Project.

Please find attached the Ambassadors Program Schedule.

To apply for the Ambassador Program please complete the attached form and return to ILOP Project Officer by Friday the 22nd of June 2012.



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How did we recruit Ambassadors?

Colac Otway Shire Positive Ageing Ambassadors Program

Expression of interest form

Why would you like to participate in the Ambassadors Program?

What skills and interests do you have?

Participant Agreement

I am willing and able to attend the overnight mid-week retreat at the Cape Otway Light Station on Wednesday the 18th and Thursday the 19th of July.

I am willing and able to commit to the Ambassador Workshop Series as per attached schedule.

I am willing and able to commit to participate in conducting community conversations to gain ideas from older people about projects that will make a positive difference to older people in my community.

I am willing and able to commit to working with a community organisation to develop a project that will contribute to making a positive difference to older people within my community between Nov 2012 and August 2013.

I am willing and able to commit an average of 6 hours per fortnight between June 2012 and August 2013 to the role of Positive Ageing Ambassador.

Name: _____

Signature : _____

Date: _____

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How did we recruit Ambassadors?

An overnight retreat was held at the commencement of the program

The overnight retreat at Cape Otway was attended by potential Ambassadors, as well as the project worker, 3 staff involved in aged care services, rural access staff, and a manager.

Workshops, discussion groups and a number of open and frank conversations over two days identified those who had a genuine interest in the project. The retreat was in itself a quasi interview process. Staff got together a number of times and discussed each potential Ambassador. It became obvious that the diversity, energy level and commitment of these older people would be an asset for the project.

The final session of the retreat was a conversation clarifying the commitment that each person was able to make as an Ambassador to support older people in their local community. All participants, bar one, agreed to become an Ambassador.

“The aim of the retreat was to establish the group early and create a sense of purpose and identity with the activities.”

“The gathering of the ambassadors and council staff at Cape Otway was an extraordinary event. We didn't know what to expect. Both the ambassadors and the council staff were there really to see what this project was about and where it could go.”

“It was two days of great conversations, two days of great friendship, it was very exhausting, but it was very exhilarating. And I think the benefits that came out of that meeting of ambassadors and council staff created the impetus to move forward, it created that understanding and the respect.”

Greg Fletcher, Manager Community Services, Colac Otway Shire Council



“Although some of the Ambassadors I already knew vaguely, learning what skills, strengths and attributes they would bring to the project and how we would fare in mutual support was very much an unknown at that point.”

Tony Grogan, Gellibrand Ambassador

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How did we recruit Ambassadors?

Positive Ageing Ambassador Program retreat

Discussion prompts and activities

Views about ageing

- How old is an older person?
- What do you expect to be like when you reach that age?
- What symbolises ageing to you?

What do you think of the term Senior?

Tell us something about:

- How you spend your time
- Your work in the local community
- Any community groups you belong to
- What each community group does
- Favourite childhood memory
- A special skill that you can share
- Special object

What is the definition of an Ambassador?

- What do you think the role of an Ambassador is?
- What skills are important for this role?
- Who is someone that you think is a good Ambassador?
- What is advocacy and why do it?
- Can you tell us about a time when you were an advocate for something or someone?

Ambassador's Stories Activity

- What do you hope to offer/develop during the Ambassador Program?
- Do you have a project or idea that you would like to work on in more detail for the Ambassador Program?
- Tell others what you would like to do and why it is important to you?

Ambassador Profile Activity

What questions would you ask to interview one of our Ambassadors in order to develop a short profile about them – full group to generate list of questions.

In pairs choose 5 questions to ask your partner in order to develop a short profile about them to promote their role as an Ambassador.

In pairs conduct interviews in front of group

- Interviews will be filmed
- Short written profiles documented.
- Photos of Ambassadors



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What next?

The Positive Ageing Ambassadors workshop series

Monthly workshops were held to provide an environment where Ambassadors could gather regularly, share ideas, debate, exchange information and skills, participate in discussions and hear from guest speakers. They also provided the opportunity to learn skills in community development, developing surveys and the use of iPads which were provided as a resource and communication tool.

These workshops were organised and run by Council's Positive Ageing Ambassador project worker.

Feedback from participants has highlighted the importance of the regular gatherings and workshop days. Peer reflection, sharing experiences and group learning and encouraging each other were key outcomes.

The workshops also provided the opportunity to keep each other honest, when developing their projects, by the need to prove to their peer Ambassadors that their project was developed around feedback from their community and not just an Ambassadors' 'pet-dream'.

The project worker and manager met regularly to discuss the outcomes from these workshops and any issues that needed addressing.

“Further workshops were held after the retreat where we developed techniques for interviews, information collection and exchange of ideas ...this further strengthened the resolve and commitment of the volunteers..”

“..it is interesting to note that there is such a high rate of support for the success of this project among participants.”

Tony Grogan, Gellibrand Ambassador



Lyn Foster, Ambassador

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What next?

Example Asset Based Community Development mapping activity



Getting Acquainted... Each community has something that makes it unique...Demographics are an important part of the picture....but only part of the picture...

Discussion Prompts:

- What is your definition of community?
- What do you think your community is good at doing?
- History of community
- Preferred future vision

Resources

- People
- Environment
- Culture
- Skills Base
- Interest Base

Volunteers

- Nature of volunteering
- Community Groups
- Facilities

Local Business

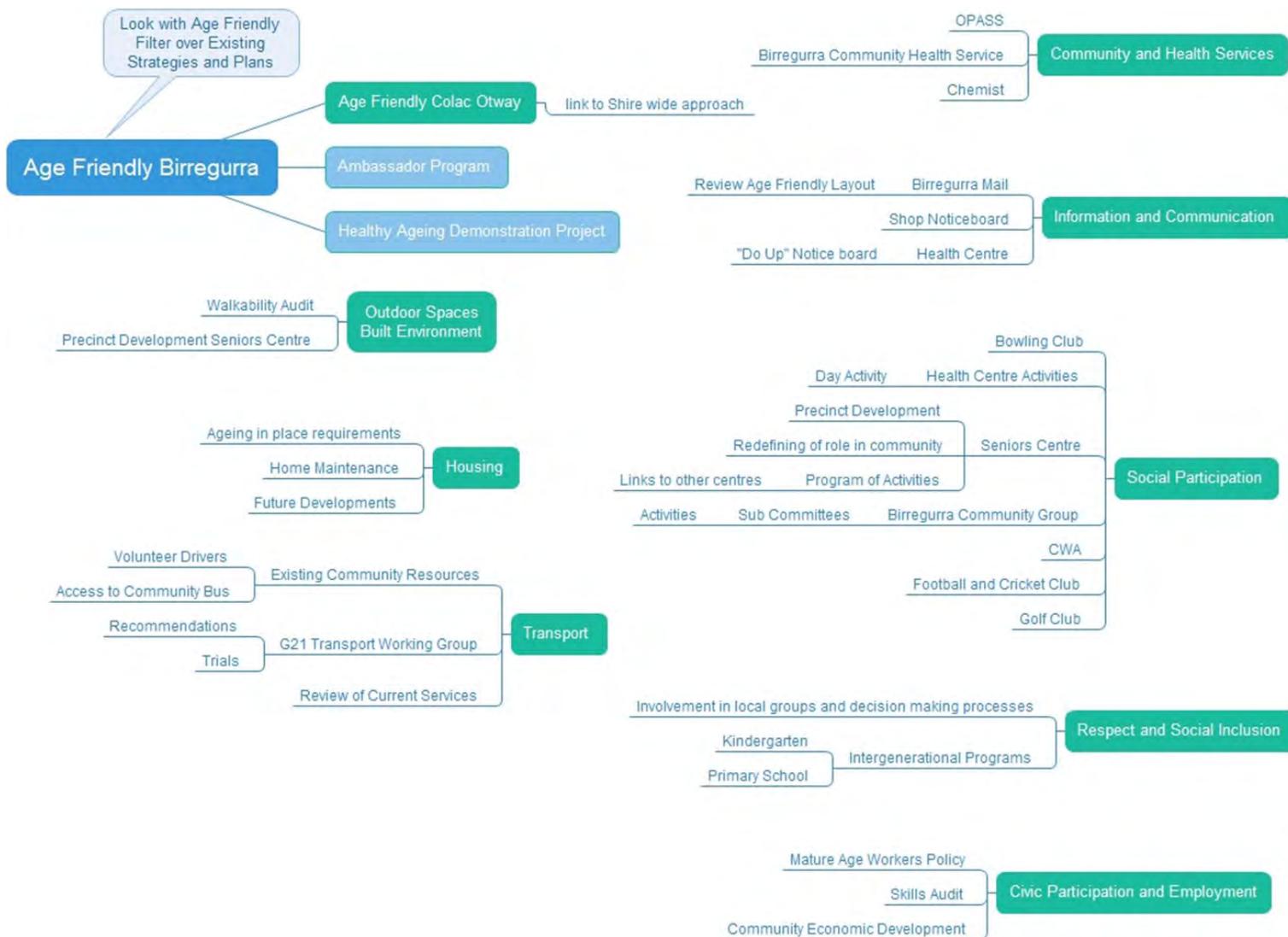
- Community Economics
- Capacity to manage change



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What next?

Example of age-friendly mapping



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Giving status to Ambassadors

The Ambassador badge

Each Ambassador signed up to work for Council as a volunteer. In this position they were recognised as an Ambassador that linked older peoples ideas and concerns into Council's services, infrastructure, community participation and advocacy roles.

The Ambassador Badge gave Ambassadors a confidence to participate within their communities, and contact and interact with council officers and key stakeholders.

The badge is worn with pride and identity by Ambassadors and became an important symbol of their official role, value and recognition of their efforts.

"Being an Ambassador makes me proud that I can be part of a process that can actually hear the problems, report the problem and be part of a group that will get that information to Council so that it can put it in their planning programs for the future."

"I can feel important working with the other Ambassadors that are part of the group. We are all working on different projects but they all meld together and we are all working for improving the liveability of older people."

Moira Howard–Brooks, Colac Ambassador

Use of iPads by ambassadors

iPads were provided to all Ambassadors to assist with their role. The majority of the Ambassadors, with support, became very proficient in using them as a method of communication, research, storage of key documentation, minute taking, community surveys and conversations. For those few Ambassadors that did not want to use iPads alternative support was provided to undertake their role.

The iPads were a sign of recognising and investing in the Ambassadors as they were the key conduit to the communities that they represented.



Jeff Speirs, Forrest Ambassador

I think we were given an iPad because using technology is seen as an important tool for older people and it's something that we need to develop in ourselves and encourage those around us to use, because increasingly we live in a technological age and it's even difficult to pay a bill sometimes unless you have the internet."

"So we were given an iPad each and some instruction on how to use that, and encouragement to use it, and when I went to workshops I would just type notes on the iPad and that was a good resource to remind me of what we did, important points that people made, and what other people were doing."

Jenny Lang, Beeac/Cressy Ambassador

Consultation findings

The Ambassador Consultation

Ambassadors facilitated a series of workshops, conversations and interviews in the smaller townships to generate community based ideas.

For example, during the commencement phase of the project Ambassadors undertook the Positive Ageing Ambassador's Postcard Project during Seniors Week in 2012. The Postcard Project posed two questions:

- What makes your community a great place to live in?
- What would make life better?

Older people were encouraged to add their thoughts on the reverse of the card to assist the Ambassadors in developing their local Ambassador Projects. Ambassadors were happy to answer any questions or discuss issues with people.



An Ambassador's Consultation Findings

When we began consultations with the older people in our community I think most of us became a little confused as to what we needed to concentrate on as a project priority but as time went on the issues began to clarify themselves to claim our focus while other secondary matters could also be handled as well with a little co-operation with other organisations in the community.

Similarities identified by different Ambassadors have shown that many concerns require a common approach by council rather than individual projects

Tony Grogan, Gellibrand Ambassador

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Consultation findings

Positive Ageing Ambassadors Age-Friendly Communities snapshot report

Through the varied consultation undertaken by Ambassadors a number of key themes emerged across all communities

- Outdoor spaces and buildings (seating/pathways/lighting)
- Transportation
- Housing
- Respect and social inclusion
- Social participation
- Communication and information
- Civic participation and employment opportunities
- Community and supported health services

These themes are explored further in the Appendix



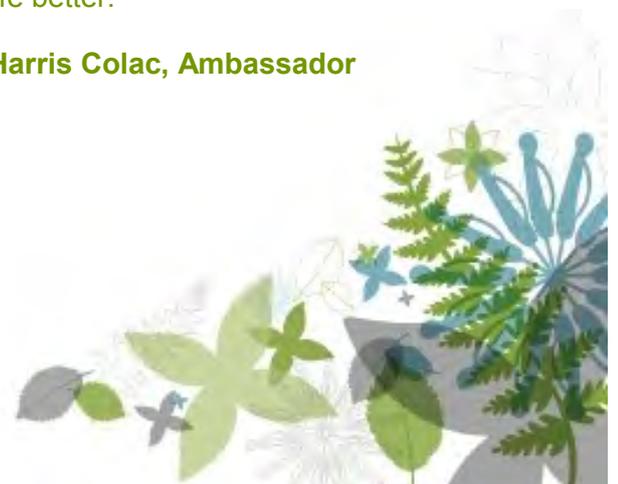
Betty Harris, Colac Ambassador

“There were a range of things that kept coming up from lighting to footpaths but seating was the thing that kept coming up. A lot of older people walk into town and need somewhere along the way.”

“I felt after walking the streets and talking to people about what they needed; that a lack of seating at both ends of the main street was something that I could help with.”

“I am happy that people can see that I have listened to them and got something done to help make life better.”

Betty Harris Colac, Ambassador



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Partnerships



Positive Ageing Ambassador Partnerships

It was important that other local organisations, which were involved in providing support services to older people, were consulted on the planning for the project and were identified as potential support for the Ambassadors, when required.

Many of project partners are placed-based throughout the Shire and were, in a number of cases, integral in providing background information and direction on the projects that the Ambassadors were involved in.

The benefit of being within a rural municipality is that Council regularly partners with a number of health services, community groups and not-for-profit agencies that support and serve older people in our communities. The list of project partners on this page are already partners with Council in various capacities and projects.

Partnership are necessary within the Shire to ensure that, collectively, we provide a seamless system of services that support and engage with older people.

Council's intent to support the Ambassadors as the face of a Community Advisory Group for Council will require a continuing cooperative approach with all of the partners into the future.

Project Partners

- Colac Area Health
- Birregurra Community Health Centre
- Otway Health
- Hesse Rural Health Service
- Beeac Community Health Centre
- Community Hub Inc
- South West Do Care
- Colac Otway Network of Neighbourhood Houses
- Colac Otway Shire Older Persons Ability Support Services
- U3A



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The projects

The Ambassador Projects

As discussed within this Toolkit each of the Ambassadors were given \$3,000 of funds to undertake a local community project or use the funds to seed a larger project.

However, this funding was only provided once they satisfied the other Ambassadors on the criteria that they consulted extensively within their community and that the project would address needs or opportunities that older people considered important.

The Ambassadors met regularly during the planning and development stages of their projects. It was a team effort to ensure that each Ambassador was supported in working towards a great result for their community.

Every Ambassador was successful in demonstrating the community need for the project they were proposing.

It was important that Council didn't influence the direction or outcomes of the Ambassadors projects.

The projects were developed around the themes of:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings (seating/ pathways/lighting)
- Transportation
- Housing
- Respect and social inclusion
- Social participation
- Communication and information
- Civic participation and employment opportunities
- Community and supported health services



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Outdoor spaces and buildings (seating/pathways/lighting)

The physical environment is an important determinant of physical and mental health for everyone. Creating supportive environments, including age-friendly outdoor spaces and building design, can enhance physical wellbeing and quality of life, accommodate individuality and independence, foster social interaction and enable people to conduct their daily activities. (1)

The primary concerns across all communities were footpaths, seating, lighting and the maintenance of community facilities. Heavy doors, lack of heating/cooling and access to public buildings was a key concern. Having access to facilities including Senior Citizen Centres was a concern for groups requiring meeting and activity venues. Lack of lighting was highlighted as a key safety concern. Seasonal conditions vary throughout the year and impact upon walkability of rural and coastal communities.

The difference in social cohesion and interaction in rural communities that had age-friendly facilities to those that did not was highlighted.

“Participation in the existing group by retirees who move into the area is not encouraged as 10 is the maximum number who can comfortably fit in a private home. They have considered meeting in a public venue but resident says that the steps are a deterrent as they are too steep and the ramp is a long way round as is the parking facilities. The public hall is too cold in winter and the supper room is not a cosy environment.”

Resident interview

“The Barongarook Hall is a great venue for local activities. The Hall Committee is reasonably active and has a couple of fundraising activities each year. The committee has two members from the Barongarook Landcare Group, two from the Barongarook Tennis Club and two (or more) from the Wednesday afternoon Craft Group. The Craft Group meets in the Hall every Wednesday afternoon with as many as 12 ladies attending. They work on their individual craft projects and also have some group projects. Most but not all of the members would fit in the seniors age group. The Tennis Club is active mostly with junior teams.”

Jan Healey, Ambassador



Ambassador actions

- Walkability Audit conducted in Apollo Bay and findings submitted to Active Transport Strategy and Pathways Strategy
- Installation of 5 seats at sites identified during consultations in Colac and Apollo Bay
- Letter to Shire advocating on behalf of pathway requirements in Beeac and Cressy. Works since completed
- Ambassador Project Access and Mobility
- Ambassadors have continuing representation on access, equity and inclusion working groups including walkability initiatives
- Ambassador advocating specific community concerns to council and officers

Helen Pinini,
Apollo Bay Ambassador

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Appendix

Transportation

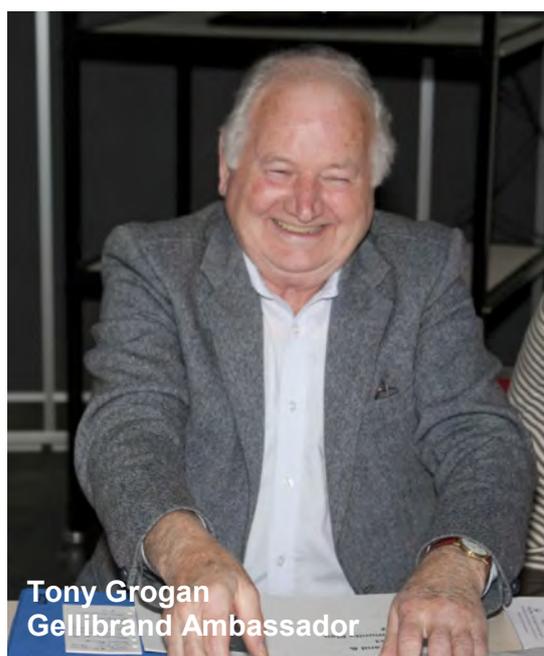
Whether driving a car or taking public or private transportation, access to transportation allows seniors to participate in social, cultural, volunteer and recreational activities, as well as enabling them to carry out such daily tasks as working, shopping or going to appointments. (1)

Transport was highlighted as a key factor across the Shire in all of the townships. Across the shire the size of population is a key consideration in the viability of programs and services. The economic cost of fuel and maintaining a car was a major concern.

People having to give up their licence due to age and health considerations has become an issue of isolation.

Key reasons for people requiring transport

- Social connections
- Cinema, Morning Melodies, Out and About Bus trips
- Visiting family and friends
- Health and wellbeing
- Access to medical services and appointments
- Accessing fitness activities i.e. gym and pools
- Shopping: a good diet and adequate food supply are central for promoting and maintaining health and wellbeing
- Work and education opportunities are available centrally in Colac which means people have to travel to access
- Links to service and sporting clubs and their activities ensuring people can access opportunities



Tony Grogan
Gellibrand Ambassador

Ambassador actions

- Gellibrand Ambassador Tony Grogan presented to the community forum held by the G21 Transport Pillar. Tony gave an overview of Ambassador findings and presented recommendations on behalf of ILOP Ambassadors and their communities regarding community bus usage and trials

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Appendix

Housing

The ability to live independently in one's own home depends on a range of factors, including good health, finances and the availability of support services (such as medical and personal care). Many older persons feel that they could continue to live in the homes they have inhabited for years or decades, but under certain conditions. For example, the availability of help with housework, gardening or repair work could enable seniors to remain in their homes. (1)

Key issues that were discussed include:

- Costs of rates and insurances can make it difficult to stay in and maintain your home
- Some people need help cleaning up their yards
- Food waste needs to be collected more regularly
- Problems with bin lids and wheels

Colac Consultations

“Consultations resulted in most people satisfied with environment and activities available. Most things lacking are minor but would help people stay in their homes.

There is value of staying in known community for liveability. Handyman, odd jobs such as cleaning out gutters etc. an ongoing challenge for older people and is perilous. Retired farmers, logging workers, and tree changers together with their family form the majority of today's senior citizens of the area and represent the target group of my efforts to effect some improvement in their lifestyle and to enable them to stay in their homes and their communities for longer.”

Tony Grogan, Gellibrand Ambassador

“This resident has been keeping herself busy with her extensive garden since being widowed 25 years ago, she has a neighbour with a ride on mower who mows her main lawn and road frontage but wonders how she will manage when her neighbour is too old to mow them for her, would also like some help pruning her trees.”

Community resident

Ambassador actions

- Advocate to council for planning and infrastructure for transitional and long term care options in smaller rural communities
- Explore possibilities of a working group of able bodied volunteer gardeners to help older people around town, look at reviving garden groups, talk to Neighbourhood House
- Research models of age-friendly housing to advocate to council re planning and infrastructure



Lyn Foster, Ambassador

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Appendix

Respect and social inclusion

Older persons want to do more than simply continue to reside in their communities - they want to be able to contribute to, and benefit from, community life.

Active and involved seniors are less likely to experience social isolation and more likely to feel connected to their communities. These connections are particularly important, given the strong linkages between social isolation and health. While social isolation tends to increase as people age, communities that promote social participation and inclusion are better able protect the health of their citizens, including those who are socially isolated. Research also shows that one of the factors associated with feelings of loneliness is a feeling of lack of respect. Like social isolation, loneliness can have a negative impact on health. (1)

“My reflection is that about 70% of people were happy as things are. Of course these are the people that are out and about. As I have been saying all along what about the people who are confined to their home or don't go out.”

Bus trips are very popular with groups she has spoken to. Mornings are often more suitable for older people though do not want early pickups.

Betty Harris, Colac Ambassador

“This resident really enjoyed the “morning tea”, get together and chat and feels that this should be on a regular basis as it engenders a closer community spirit.”

“Colac has no shortage of activities for people of all ages, it's only a matter of choosing a few within ones budget.”

A group of 8-10 ladies get together once a fortnight to play cards, this group has been going for many years meeting in each others homes and each “donates a small sum to cover the cost of tea/coffee and biscuits.”

Colac residents

On respect

- Respect or lack of respect- changes in society attitudes about respect.
- Need to deserve respect , earn it, not a right
- Need to have base line respect as a norm in society
- Difference between respect and authority
- “Most kids are pretty nice”
- Abuse of older people does happen by families, particularly over money or assets.

On attitudes towards Positive Ageing

- People need to have a sense of purpose in their own lives
- Ask what can I do?
- A sense of person is important
- As you get older you have a better sense of your own boundaries
- You need to take care of physical and mental health
- People have similar issues regardless of age
- You need a sense of accomplishment and keep looking for achievements
- Isolation is a major thing for older people
- Families often live further away now
- Keep Learning

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Appendix

Social participation

Social networks, social participation and feelings of belonging are important to healthy living, disease prevention and the prevention of isolation among seniors. Older people who remain active in society and socially connected are happier, physically and mentally healthier, and better able to cope with life's ups and downs. (1)

Ambassadors are identifying and encouraging social and recreational activities that could be developed in their communities.

"Need to make sure that things like toilet stops, awareness of hearing impairments and costs are considered."

"There are few options for low cost artistic pursuits."

"Sometimes family limits you in how much they think you can or can't do "Can't ask Mum to walk too far" "if a person cannot do something find a way that they can do it."

"There is a big difference between disability and age and whether you have a major or minor disability."

"I am looking at working in with Do Care to look at some day trips and supporting individual older people who need some help whether that be with shopping and maintenance and someone to have a cuppa and a talk to."

"The Lions Club does great work here and there is the Men's Shed and the Neighbourhood House offers programs for the community as well."

"Cressy has about seven local community organisations which meet at the Cressy Neighbourhood Centre. Sadly the local primary school closed a few years ago and the hotel some years earlier."

"Issues for older people - affordability, social connections, accepting of own limitations and stage of life but still taking the steps to be involved without over committing and taking responsibility for own health and mental health."

Community residents



**Judy Pyke,
Ambassador**

Ambassador actions

- Convening men in the small towns of Cressy and Beeac to participate in social activities, such as men's sheds. As the project couldn't afford to build a men's shed in these communities, an alternative was arranged where those men who had their own sheds would host a men's shed session.
- Attending local health centres was not something that men did in the smaller towns. It was decided to hold a health forum in the local pub. Men and their partners/children were invited to attend to discuss the physical and mental health of local older men in the district.

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Communication and information

Keeping older adults informed - not only about community events, but about broader community information - allows seniors to be better connected to their community and supports them in their daily activities. (1)

Rapidly changing technology and ways of communicating present challenges across all communities in keeping older adults informed.

Information being presented in a range of forms was highlighted as a priority. A key theme was that if you don't have a computer you are "in the dark" and that poor internet access across areas of the Shire prevented access.

"Some groups don't print newsletters anymore just email them and even though I am a life member of a group I don't get the newsletter anymore."

"Having lots of printed information given to you is less preferable to having someone to talk to ..."

"I have found that the information is out there when you need it."

"I love Skype it keeps me in touch with my grandchildren."

"LOCAL Phone numbers of help available to be put on cards in large numbers and sent out."

"More information on availability of services for the elderly."

"There is a need to better co ordinate information about available services and programs."

Resident also noted that things happen in Gellibrand which concern residents but of which they are unaware until later

"The local school is willing to offer computer tuition and mobile phone tuition to older people to be arranged at a time when they are in Colac shopping."

" There are opportunities to increase awareness of services such as computer training at library annex, services for older people through the Cressy newsletter."

Community residents



Sherryl Smith
Wye River Ambassador

Ambassador actions

- Seniors to access technology training which could be through local high schools, library and U3A
- Conducting U3A Courses and participating in tablet users group
- Ambassadors provided review of wording in council information.
- Supporting the development of local community newsletters
- Hosting a Positive Ageing Forum during Seniors Week to promote opportunities for involvement in activities and programs and providing information on existing services and groups
- A new Local community radio show project featuring information and news for seniors

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Appendix

Civic participation and employment opportunities

Seniors have a great variety of skills, knowledge and time to contribute to their communities in a range of areas, including civic participation, volunteer activities and paid employment. Their participation is linked not only to the economic prosperity and viability of their communities, but also to maintaining their own mental and physical health and social connectedness. (1)

- A lack of employment and retraining programs and opportunities for older workers was highlighted in rural communities.
- More information and assistance designed to support small and home based business in a format suitable for older workers was highlighted as a strategy to support rural communities.
- Volunteering opportunities and options were seen as being available and well supported.

“Despite being small, our community comprises a surprising range of professions/trades, skills, life experiences, hobbies and interests. Residents also have a wider network of ‘interesting’ friends and relatives. So we have a great resource to draw on.

Overwhelmingly the community feels the best way to improve liveability for older people is to include them as a vital part of all our activities. They’re the glue in our community.”

Sherryl Smith, Wye River Ambassador

“A challenge for small communities is to get enough people on a committee. Helping people to change roles with the different groups they are involved with. Often dealing with past history between groups”

“Being a “senior” defines ability which is often seen as not able to.”

“There is a sense of discrimination “leave age off resume”

“Retirement needs a 20 year plan.”

Community residents

Ambassador actions

SHARP - (Social, Healthy, Active, Resilient, Productive Seniors)

“The proposal is to develop a course for people aged 60+ that would allow them to investigate and reflect on positive and productive ageing opportunities in their local area and then develop a plan that would encourage each of them to take steps to become more engaged with their communities. This would be offered in Colac and Camperdown and then also in another smaller centre in each Shire.”

Ambassadors have spoken with local services and groups to promote ILOP and Age-Friendly Communities and opportunities to be involved. Ambassadors have been working with organisations in their communities to increase networking, partnerships and assist the sustainability of community organisations and committees.

Jan Healey, Ambassador



Jan Healey, Ambassador

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Appendix

Community and supported health services

Whether or not older people are able to age in place depends upon a number of factors, including the availability of support and services that meet the varying needs of seniors. These include professional services, such as medical and personal care. (1)

In the rural townships moving into Colac was seen as a natural progression due to access to health services and difficulty in maintaining homes. Community Health Centres are identified as crucial hubs in increasing liveability of older people in rural and regional communities.

“he still drives at age 85 and worries about the lack of public transport from/to Gellibrand when she can no longer drive. She has no financial worries and is independent minded and says the pension is ample to live on if one is careful.”

‘I found out that Forrest has not had a first aid course offered to locals for some 35 years I am organising a course with the community organisations for locals and this will benefit all the groups in the area. ‘

“I am also investigating the installation of a fire dial at Forrest and how the community could work together to provided this community awareness and warning system to locals and tourists. “

“A big thing in Forrest is that it has changed and a lot of the older people have either moved into Colac for care or passed on. It is more tourism here now and the older people that have been farmers all their lives don't get involved in things. If you want to have a chat to them you would go to the cattle sales...”

Small town residents



**Jeff Speirs,
Forrest Ambassador**

Ambassador actions

- Ambassadors participated in Public Health and Wellbeing Plan consultations
- Promoting existing services to residents and responding and advocating regarding specific enquiries
- First Aid Course held in Forrest
- Working with local community health centres to offer health and wellbeing programs and activities

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