

Committee
for
Sydney

Dignity and choice

An inclusive future for our ageing population

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Foreword

For Sydney to be a great city, it needs to be inclusive and liveable for residents of all ages. This includes not just the city's workers and younger families, but also those residents who have contributed to this city's success and now wish to retire in a place that they have come to call home.

Retirees value the opportunity to participate in activities, stay connected to their community and still maintain their independence. And, they also can enjoy the freedom that retirement provides without the hassle of home maintenance.

Planning for the ageing of our population requires a significant amount of foresight, not least because many of the major infrastructure projects, urban renewal projects and transport systems being built today will still be place when one quarter of our population will be retirement age and one in seven will be over 75. We also know that the promotion of active and social ageing throughout an individual's retirement is critical to reduced health expenditures later in life and to achieving an overall better quality of life for a city's residents. Finally, we also know that the housing needs of an older population are likely to differ substantially from those of the broader working population and young families.

Stockland is proud to support this work. Over 12,000 residents call a Stockland retirement village their home and we are focused on an increasing trend that is seeing seniors looking for low maintenance, inner city lifestyles.

As one of Australia's top three Retirement Living Operators, we are passionate about both the redevelopment and renewal of existing villages as well as creating housing choices giving older Australians the option to downsize and move into connected communities with centralised health and lifestyle services.

In supporting this research, Stockland acknowledges that the ageing of our population is not a phenomenon that is unique to Sydney, nor are many of the changes we must make unique to this city. In that vein, this is not a challenge we can resolve without conscious and considerable action. We hope that policy makers across Australia will also embrace the recommendations of this report in order to make all of our Australia cities and towns liveable and inclusive for older citizens.

We are proud to present this paper and commend its recommendations to you.

Kirily Lord

General Manager of Retirement Living Operations and Legal Administration, Stockland

Older Australians are an important part of our city, communities and families. They enrich our lives and enhance our society. They deserve to experience Sydney as younger generations do, and live with a sense of belonging, dignity, safety, enjoyment and community.

Older Australians need meaningful choices and opportunities to live well. People desire connection- to be close to their families and their friends, and near the places that bring joy and meaning to their lives.

BaptistCare NSW & ACT has been serving and caring for older Australians for 75 years. We support over 15,000 people across NSW and the ACT through more than 160 facilities and programs and we see firsthand how issues such as housing affordability, transport connectivity and social isolation affect the quality of life of older Australians. Sadly, many older Australians face diminishing options shaped by the difficulties encountered as they age and confront a reality that it is becoming more and more difficult to live with dignity and security in Sydney.

This need not be the case. Our demographics and population is changing, and Sydney can and must adapt to meet these needs. We have a collective responsibility to support older Australians to live safely and happily in our city.

This report canvasses many practical and effective measures that can be implemented to ensure an inclusive future for our ageing population. Increased home care packages, affordable rental properties, safe and reliable transportation, inclusive and dementia friendly public spaces and active living will ensure older Australians can live a full life safely and happily with or near their loved ones and with access to vital services. These are all achievable goals.

On behalf of all of us at BaptistCare, I thank the Committee for Sydney for producing this research, and ask policymakers to review the recommendations of this report and give them the consideration they so thoroughly deserve.

Ross Low

Chief Executive Officer, BaptistCare

Executive Summary

The ageing of our population presents a fundamental challenge for how cities are able to function. Policy makers will need to embrace a paradigm shift that views city and project planning through a lens where a full 42% of the population sits outside of the working age bracket of 15-64. This has implications for almost every area of public policy and for all levels of government.

This report provides a series of policy proposals to achieve a more inclusive and liveable city. While many of the recommendations put forward are centred on the needs of older residents, their implementation would have benefits for the whole community.

Central to this report are the dual themes of *Dignity and Choice*. This means policy makers will need to do more than to just provide the bare minimum. It is not enough to simply build more retirement housing if the only place where such development is allowed to occur is on the isolated urban fringe of the city. It is not enough to simply connect a bus route to an area with retirees if that route is both infrequently and doesn't take retirees to the places that they want to go. It is not enough for communities to create new public spaces if those same spaces don't have sufficient seating or shading for an increasingly elderly population. It is not enough to develop a health strategy for seniors which ignores the mental health challenges of loneliness and social isolation. Finally, it is not enough to have a public policy strategy to deal with the ageing population but which doesn't consider the challenge of rising rates of dementia. *Dignity and Choice* is about recognising that wellbeing for seniors is directly linked to the degree in which older individuals feel that they have a say in where they can live, where they can go, and who they can see.

On housing, cities are witnessing the rise of community opposition to retirement living and aged care facilities, which not only deprives retirees of a choice in where they will live, but which also increases the barriers to downsizing

for seniors, whose property could help fill a shortage in two or three bedrooms for younger families seeking to enter the property market. For non-home owners, less than 1% of Sydney's listed rental properties on the market, including studio apartments, are affordable to either a couple or individual receiving the full aged pension. This has led to a worrying increase in homelessness among women aged 55 and over.¹ For those who are able to secure an affordable rental property, tenancy laws make it difficult for them to access government funded home modifications to enable them to age in place.

On transport and health, evidence suggests that two of the primary reasons why older residents don't use public transport more often is that it is not convenient and that it doesn't take them to where they need to go. By contrast, when transport on demand is provided, trials have shown that the primary destination for older users is to their local GP, indicating that transport on demand may be undervalued in terms of their potential contribution to preventative health outcomes and its associated health savings. Evidence also suggests that active ageing and walking is important for reducing health costs associated with a sedentary lifestyle. However, beyond a lack of frequent seating and shading, a substantial reason why more seniors don't walk on the sidewalk is driven by concerns that they could experience a fall if they are forced to share that sidewalk with bicycles and electric scooters. In that sense, a failure to provide more separated bike paths may in fact be contributing to social isolation and a lack of active ageing, creating future health expenditures for state budgets.

On public spaces and mental health, research has shown that investing in places where people can meet and be social is critical to tackling social isolation and loneliness. No less than one-third of older individuals already experience either loneliness or severe loneliness,² and COTA Australia predicts that the number of socially isolated people will more than double by 2040.³ This has implications for health

1 BaptistCare, The most rapidly growing group of homeless Australians – it's not who you think

2 Minister for Aged Care, Ken Wyatt AM, Speech to the Tackling Aged Care Mental Health & Social Isolation Conference

3 COTA, Social Isolation: Its impact on the mental health and wellbeing of older Victorians



policy as well, with international research confirming that people who are socially isolated or lonely are also more likely to report risky health behaviours such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, and smoking.⁴ Addressing this will require a coordinated look at how planners design our town centres, streets and public spaces, while also looking at how communities can make their social offering more inclusive to elderly residents.

Figures compiled by Deloitte Access Economics for Dementia Australia calculate that the number of NSW residents living with dementia will increase from around 120,000 today to roughly 300,000 in 2050.⁵ Many of the challenges identified so far are doubly critical for those who have dementia. International research has identified a full 35% of people with dementia had self-reported experiences of loneliness in the recent past.⁶ Ageing in place is also critically important to delaying the onset and difficulty of dementia. Our urban form and design must consider the needs of people with dementia, and while towns like Kiama are leading the charge on this front, planning for dementia is an area that all local areas will need to put more effort into.

To demonstrate the scale of the challenge confronting policy makers, the Committee for Sydney undertook polling to determine whether Sydneysiders felt that their suburb catered to retirees and older people. Almost 50% of those surveyed responded that it did not. Of those that rate their area poorly, more than half expect to leave the area in retirement. Conversely, of those that rate their area as catering well, 71% expect to stay in the area in retirement. Affordability of support was identified as a core reason behind why people may choose to simply leave Sydney, with one-third of respondents worried that they would not be able to support themselves in retirement. This number jumped to 41% for women and 46% for people who are renting.

The prospect of a such a large proportion of the city's senior population being forced to leave, not by choice but by financial necessity, is one that should concern all policy makers. To ensure that such an outcome does not happen, and that senior residents are given dignity and choice in how they live, the Committee for Sydney offers this paper as a contribution to making a better city.

4 Age and Ageing, Social isolation and loneliness as risk factors for the progression of frailty

5 Deloitte Access Economics, Dementia across Australia, 2011-2050

6 Turning Up the Volume: Unheard voices of people with dementia.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Australian Government

Federal Treasury

- Encourage downsizing by establishing an age pensioners savings account scheme that would be made available to age pensioners for investing any surplus funds from the sale of the principal residence, and for those funds to be exempt from the Age Pension assets and income tests. This fund would be made available to fund aged care and retirement village costs.

Federal Department of Health

- Increase per capita spending on aged care facilities, while working with industry to identify how to improve the sector's financial viability.
- Increase the number of Home Care Packages on offer with priority given to closing the gap for care packages targeted at those with higher needs and disabilities.
- Ensure that a sufficient number of Home Care Packages are available to support the needs of a growing number of Australians living with dementia.

Federal Department of Education and Training

- Develop a larger tertiary curriculum to ensure that Australia's carer workforce is being adequately trained to deal with the challenges of social isolation and dementia.
- Fund dementia education programs specifically targeted at retirement village operators and staff.
- Provide support for the development of dementia education programs specifically targeted at retirement village operators and staff.
- Fund universities to trial innovative pilots that involve older residents in both learning and the teaching of areas that sit outside the standard curriculum.

Federal Department of Social Services

- Prioritise allocations of home care packages which provide service-integrated housing in retirement villages for people with dementia.
- Introduce an Australian version of the UK Government's Side by Side volunteer initiative, which encourages younger people to buddy up with people with dementia.

Recommendations for the NSW Government

NSW Department of Planning and Environment:

- Ensure that inclusionary zoning policies take into consideration the need to design some social housing for financially disadvantaged renting retirees.
- Change tenancy legislation, placing the onus on landlords to justify why federal government funded ageing-friendly home modifications should not be allowed to occur.
- Update the NSW Apartment Design Guidelines to encourage design that is more ageing and disability friendly or more easily retrofittable to become ageing friendly.
- Conduct a review into incentives for co-living arrangements to boost affordable rental supply for the financially disadvantaged renting retiree.
- Amend the Retirement Living Act and Seniors Housing SEPP to facilitate an easier pathway to development for retirement villages and aged care facilities.

NSW Family and Community Services

- Audit the state's public housing stock to determine what proportion is appropriate in scale and design to meet the forecast growth in people living with dementia.

Transport for NSW

- Work with transport on demand trial providers to quantify the number of additional trips taken by elderly residents for medical or social purposes and which may not have occurred without a transport on demand offering.
- Ensure that public transport infrastructure and vehicles are adaptable and designed to respond to the accessibility needs of older individuals.
- Set a target to expand public transport accessibility and frequency in areas with high numbers of individuals aged 70 and over, including on the outer fringe of Sydney where public transport offerings are already sparse.

NSW Ministry of Health

- Expand the Active Living NSW partnership between the NSW Ministry of Health and the Heart Foundation NSW branch to include additional resources specifically targeted at delivering better outcome for seniors.

Recommendations for Local Government

NSW Local Councils

- Invest in seniors-friendly exercise facilities in public parks, ideally co-located near children's playgrounds.
- Provide safe and walkable pathways for senior citizens that are separated out from car and bicycle infrastructure.
- Promote more ageing-inclusive social events which are both accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse demographics and affordable for disadvantaged residents.

- Plan public spaces in accordance with COTA NSW's Basic Principles for Age-Friendly Environments and Local Government NSW's Integrated Age-Friendly Planning Toolkit.
- Conduct an audit to identify deficits in shading and seating availability, particularly in those areas with close proximity to destinations for elderly residents such as shops, the library, toilets and bus stops.
- Develop local strategies to manage the forecast growth in local residents living with dementia, drawing from Alzheimer Australia's *Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities: A toolkit for Local Government*.
- Ensure that social events are delivered in a way that makes them accessible and welcoming for people living with dementia.
- Include in future Local Plans steps to ensure that each community will support an ageing population to age in place. This should include considering demand for aged care and retirement living.
- Relax planning controls for retirement living and aged care developments which already provide community servicing infrastructure internally.
- Reduce parking minimums for retirement living and aged care facilities.
- Consider the provision of on-site amenities in setting the level of developer contributions in planning policies for retirement villages that support people with dementia and/or developments that co-locate retirement villages and residential aged care facilities that incorporate dementia-friendly design and environments.

Introduction

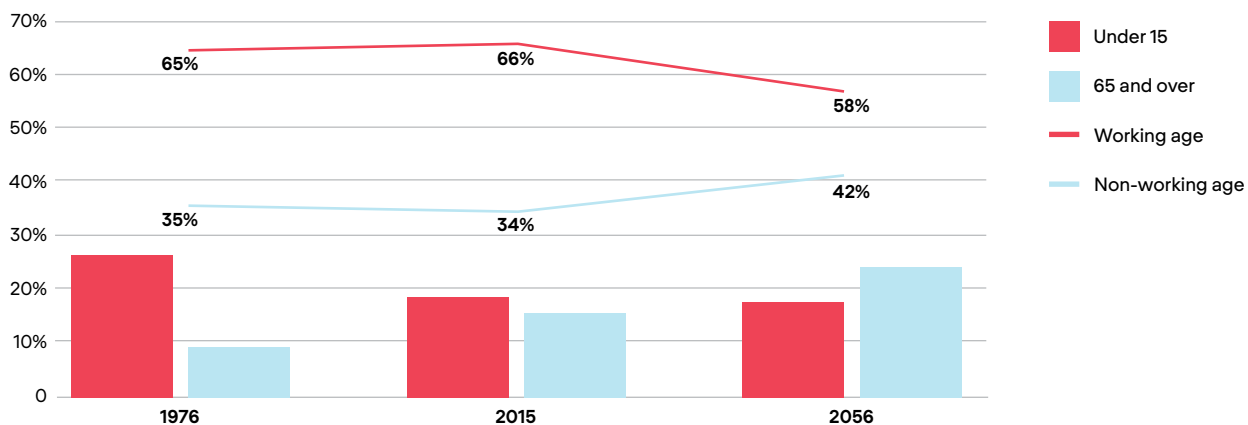
Around the world, advanced economies are grappling with the challenges of an ageing population. Neither Australia nor Sydney is exempt from this demographic shift. According to the 2016–17 *NSW Intergenerational Report*, the median age of a NSW resident increased from 29 in 1976 to 37 in 2015 and will rise further to 41 in 2056. Roughly one-quarter of the population will be aged 65 and over, almost 15% of the population will be aged 75 or over, and there will be a 12-fold increase in those aged 100 and over.⁷

Despite this, city shaping decisions are often made without sufficient consideration of how our city will change over the coming decades. Our transport spending priorities continue to focus heavily on worker journeys to the city, even though shifting demographics will result in a full 42% of NSW's population falling outside the working age bracket of 15–64. Active ageing and preventative health continue to be underrepresented in discussions around health policy, despite health spending forecasts to grow by more than 6% per year. Town planners continue to measure accessibility to

transport and services using metrics that are calculated on the walking speed of an average healthy adult. Our footpaths are often insufficiently wide, our public spaces are often poorly shaded and lack the required seating to encourage active ageing and the creation of socially engaging places for seniors. For Sydney to become a city that is inclusive for all, it needs to plan with an ageing population in mind.

There are other challenges that go beyond town planning. It is well established that social isolation is a leading contributor to poor mental health and that feelings of social isolation increase as we age. It is also well established that social isolation has negative impacts for both physical and mental health, and that it can sometimes speed the onset of dementia. And yet discussions about ageing in place tend to focus overwhelmingly on the family home, while discussions about linkages with the community are too-often neglected.

Proportion of the NSW population that is of working and non-working age



7 NSW Intergenerational Report



Sociologist Ray Oldenburg once highlighted the social importance of “third places”; those places where people spend time between their home (‘first’ place) and their work (‘second’ place), including libraries, parks, churches, recreation and health centres.⁸ These are the locations where people exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships. They are also those locations that are going to become increasingly important as our population continues to age. Other cities are pursuing innovative new strategies to break down the stratification of communities by age, generating substantial social, economic and wellbeing dividends through the creation of social, multi-aged precincts. Sydney should look to these cities for inspiration, both in terms of the social infrastructure and the community programs that are delivered.

Catering to the housing needs of an ageing population will also be an important consideration for policy makers moving forward. The challenges are multi-faceted and differ largely in scope depending on the housing profile of the demographic in question. For non-home-owning retirees, Sydney’s rental market provides very little affordability and even less security.

This has led to a worrying increase in homelessness, especially among women aged 55 and over.⁹ For home owners, regulatory and taxation barriers disincentivise downsizing and limit the likelihood that seniors will take advantage of opportunities in the retirement living sector. For older residents seeking to age in place, a shortage of Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Home Care Packages — the federally funded care and services which enable older people to live independently in their own home — has seen a blowout in waiting times, while residents who live in aged care facilities face a sector beset by concerns around financial viability. Ensuring that Sydney’s retiring population has access to affordable housing across a diverse range of typologies will likely require substantial cross government support and a program of industry collaboration. Failure to undertake the reform required to deliver on this objective risks a scenario where many older residents are forced out of Sydney through price and accessibility barriers, rather than by choice. To become an age-inclusive city, Sydney must develop a housing strategy to support its ageing population.

8 Ray Oldenburg, Project for Public Spaces

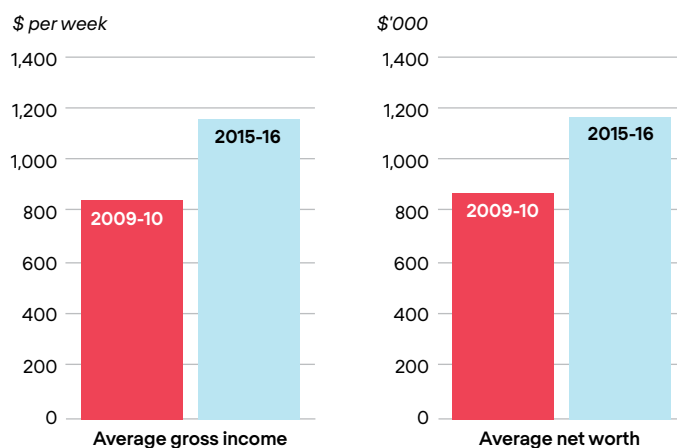
9 BaptistCare, The most rapidly growing group of homeless Australians – it’s not who you think

The challenges identified throughout this report may appear broad, but they need not be viewed through a negative lens which associates ageing with costs or complication. As University of NSW Professor Henry Brodaty explained in a speech to the Australian Human Rights Commission:

“Older Australians are active contributors. Almost half of 65–74-year-olds provide unpaid assistance to someone outside the house. One-third are volunteering through organisations, two thirds are in social or support groups, and one-quarter, despite having relatively low incomes, are financially supporting somebody outside their house either a child or a younger relative.”¹⁰

Older Australians are also destined by demography to become a larger share of the consumer and tourism market, and they are retiring with more wealth than previous generations. The average over-65 households in 2015–16 had an average income 38% higher in nominal terms than those in 2009–10, while Australians over-55 own more than half of the nation’s assets.¹¹ A large proportion of that is creditable to the high home ownership rate of Australia’s older residents, 3-in-4 of whom own their home outright. The capacity to access this equity presents a substantial economic opportunity for the cities and markets which evolve to become more attractive to seniors. The cities which fail to do so are more likely to see that equity remain trapped and unused, or worse still, shifted towards other more ageing-inclusive cities. It is up to Sydney to decide upon which side of the ledger it wishes to sit.

Weekly income and net worth of households aged over 65 years 2009-10 to 2015-16



Source: ABS Household Expenditure Survey, Deloitte Access Economics

The challenge of preparing for an ageing population is not a new discussion. The United Nation’s World Health Organisation (WHO) has produced a comprehensive framework for age-friendly cities that addressed the demographic challenge through a variety of lenses.¹² The NSW Government in 2012 released its *Ageing Strategy 2016–20* and is now undertaking a review of its future strategy.¹³ Several of NSW’s local councils have joined the World Health Organisation Global Network for Age-friendly Cities,¹⁴ Local Government NSW has released an *Integrated Age-Friendly Planning Toolkit*,¹⁵ and the Australian Local Government Association has released a paper on *Age-Friendly Built Environments*.¹⁶

This paper seeks to build on these documents by providing new recommendations and perspectives to help guide all levels of government in ensuring that their policies and objectives remain fit-for-purpose.

10 Professor Henry Brodaty, Rights Talk: Human Rights and Ageing – growing old in Australia
 11 Deloitte, Weekly economic briefing: Ageing consumers – will retailers still love me when I’m 64

12 Global Age-friendly cities: A guide
 13 Ageing Strategy 2016-20
 14 World Health Organisation Global Network for Age-friendly Cities
 15 Integrated Age-Friendly Planning Toolkit
 16 Age-Friendly Built Environments

How do Sydneysiders feel about ageing and retirement?

Recently, the Committee for Sydney commissioned Ipsos to survey 1,000 Sydneysiders on their attitudes to ageing and retirement. The findings are concerning – and demonstrate that now is the time for a rethink about how our city is planning for demographic change. It is clear that many people are worried – and that aspects that people consider vital to a good life as they age don't exist in their local community.

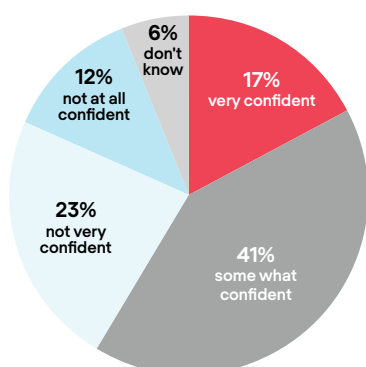
Fully one-third of Sydneysiders aren't confident that they will be able to support themselves in retirement. This number jumps to 41% for women and 46% for people who are currently renting.

When asked whether their suburb caters to retirees and older people, almost 50% of those surveyed responded that it did not. Of those that rate their area poorly, more than half expect to leave the area in retirement. Conversely, of those that rate their area as catering well, 71% expect to remain in their area during retirement.

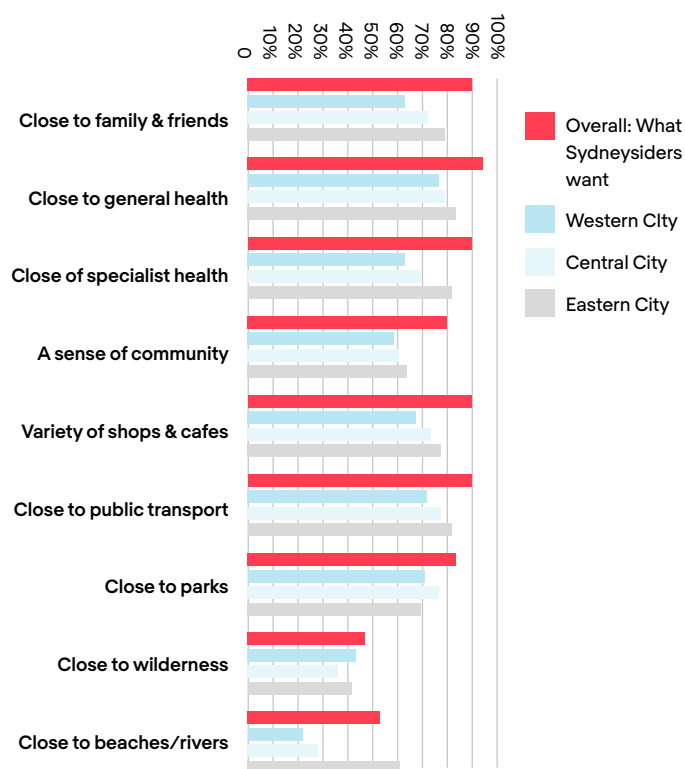
When asked what is important to them in retirement, there is unsurprising consensus across Sydneysiders on many aspects of a good community – 9 in 10 want to live close to general and specialist health services, public transport, friends and family and a variety of shops and cafes.

Interestingly, younger generations have a greater desire to live near nature – including wilderness, beaches and rivers. If this desire remains as younger generations age, demand patterns for where older people would like to live will change significantly.

How confident Sydneysiders are that they will be able to support themselves in retirement



What Sydneysiders want vs. what they have



While people in Eastern Sydney generally rate their city as catering well for when they retire – with good transport, shops and beaches – as you move further west, people rate their local community worse. Western City residents feel that access to specialist health services and diverse shops and cafés is significantly lacking.

Across all areas of the city, many people felt that their neighbourhood lacked some essential characteristics. This was especially prominent with a lack of a sense of community, but was also true of health services, transport, cafés and shops and access to friends and family.



Meeting the housing needs of an ageing population

A city cannot present itself as being all-ages inclusive if it has failed to deliver a sufficient scale and typology of housing for its older residents. If by shortage, price, or impracticality, older residents are forced to leave Sydney, the city cannot fairly claim to be inclusive.

While some retirees do choose to pursue a sea-change or tree-change, for those who wish to remain in Sydney but are denied the opportunity to do so, relocation can often mean disconnection from family, community, and a supporting social network. As will be examined later in this paper, the question of social isolation is inextricably linked to the question of health, so any outcome in which a demographic is forced to sacrifice their social connections for ageing-appropriate housing is an outcome which would have substantial costs for both our society and for government budgets. Sydney already faces a substantial challenge both with the provision of new housing supply and with the provision of affordable housing supply more specifically. This challenge will be amplified as the city's population continues to age.

Older Sydneysiders have diverse housing tenures and diverse retirement preferences. Many will own their own home outright with no mortgage to their name, others will be homeowners with a mortgage, while some will remain in the rental market. It is also true that regardless of the type of housing tenure, different individuals will have different preferences for how they retire. Many will prefer to age in place, opting for a sense of continuity and familiarity by remaining in the same house and location where they spent their most recent years of life. Others might choose to remain in the same community but will be happy to downsize in order to access the equity stored in their home. Some will prefer the comfort, convenience and social connection that

comes from living in a retirement village. The challenges facing each demographic will be different in nature and as such will require different policy solutions, but fundamental to all policy solutions should be an ambition to protect both *choice* and *dignity* in retirement. In short, whether our older citizens remain or leave Sydney should be a function of choice, not an outcome forced by necessity through a lack of alternatives.

The renting retiree

For those retirees unfortunate enough to neither own their own home nor have a substantial nest egg in retirement savings, the private rental market can be a daunting place. Less than 1% of Sydney's listed rental properties on the market, including studio apartments, are affordable to either a couple or individual receiving the full aged pension.¹⁷ For these individuals, once the regular flow of income from employment comes to a halt, so too do their rental choices. Their options become to either relocate far from their social networks, relegated to a few isolated outer-rim suburbs, or to retain those networks while seeing most of their pension eaten up by rents, leaving little for basic necessities. When the dichotomy is between isolation or poverty, a *choice* may well exist, but *dignity* does not.

Unique rental listings suitable for Income Support households

	No. affordable & appropriate (30% income)	No. appropriate (at 30% – 45% income)
2018 result	41 (<1%)	1,418 (8%)
2017 result	25 (<1%)	1,104 (8%)
Change (2017-18)	+16	+314

Source: 2018 Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot

17 2018 Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot

There is a gendered aspect to this challenge as well, with women over the age of 55 now the fastest growing demographic experiencing homelessness, at a rate that is now more than double what is seen in comparable countries such as the United Kingdom.¹⁸ Women who are today within the 55 to 64 age bracket are also facing retirement with savings that are on average 37% lower than their male counterparts, leaving them with an average balance of just \$196,000.¹⁹ As such, the failure to deliver affordable rental housing for the renting retiree is likely to have a disproportionately large impact on women, which is made even more problematic given that women have a life expectancy that is on average some 4.2 years longer than men.²⁰ For these women, they need to make even less last even longer, leaving them highly exposed to above inflation rental increases when left to the whims of the private, non-social housing market.

Tackling the challenge of affordable rent for retirees is inextricably linked to Sydney's broader affordability crisis, but in order to prevent the development of an intergenerational, geographical chasm, affordable rental housing will need to be delivered across all of Sydney and not just on its urban fringe. The Committee for Sydney has long championed an inclusionary zoning policy for all of Greater Sydney as well as a variety of measures to boost Sydney's social housing asset base.^{21 22 23}

The Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) decision to incorporate Affordable Rental Housing Targets under Objective 11 of the Metropolis of Three Cities plan was a step in the right direction.²⁴ The NSW Government now needs to take on a more ambitious series of inclusionary zoning targets, while also moving to consider whether some social housing should be reserved and designed for the financially disadvantaged renting retiree.

18 BaptistCare, The most rapidly growing group of homeless Australians – it's not who you think

19 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4125.0 – Gender Indicators, Australia, Sep 2018

20 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Deaths in Australia

21 A city for all – five game-changers for affordable housing in Sydney

22 An executive summary of the Committee for Sydney's joint submission to the Greater Sydney Commission & Transport for NSW

23 Social and affordable housing in NSW, a snapshot of innovative practice

24 Greater Sydney Commission, Housing is more diverse and affordable, Objective 11

Home care is easier for the humble home owner

Under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, senior Australians can apply for a government subsidised package of care and services designed to help them age in place and live independently in their home for as long as they choose to do so. These Home Care Packages are made eligible for those who require coordinated services to help them age in place, and the level of subsidy increases according to each individual's level of care needs.²⁵ They will typically include, but are not limited to, services to assist with:

- Nutrition, hydration, meal preparation and diet
- Mobility and dexterity
- Transport and personal assistance
- Nursing, allied health and other clinical services for those with higher care needs

One of the more practical programs available is the option to request subsidised home modifications. This can include modifications such as:

- Installing ramps and rails
- Widening doorways
- Altering bathrooms and kitchens (e.g. lowering bench heights)
- Relocating light switches and power points
- Installing emergency alarms, monitoring systems, and smart technology

These mobility enabling modifications are simple enough to work into a home care package for the humble home owner, but challenges remain for the renting retiree, who are legally prevented from receiving modifications without their landlord's consent. Given the insecurity of tenures in NSW, the remaining risk of no-fault eviction, and the well documented hesitance of existing tenants to report maintenance problems for fear of eviction, the likelihood of retirees to request

25 Australian Government, My Aged Care, About home care packages



modifications in what is an already tight rental market is likely to be slim. In this sense, the humble home owner has ageing-in-place advantages that is in practice denied to the renting retiree, leaving those renters more exposed to falls or worse.

The upcoming Royal Commission into Aged Care should examine how the existing Commonwealth Home Support Programme can be modified to make it easier for those in rental properties to take advantage of home modifications. This should also include consultation with social and affordable housing providers to determine whether additional assistance can be provided to enable the modification of some of the existing social and affordable housing stock. The NSW Government must also examine its own tenancy legislation to identify opportunities to expand renter rights for tenancing seniors, with a greater onus placed on landlords to justify why modifications should not be allowed to occur.

For the humble home owner who wants to age in place, while modifications are more readily available, a different set of challenges await. The number of consumers on the national queue for home care packages has grown by 40% in the last year alone, with 127,000 people now on the waiting list for services.²⁶ While the Australian Government has increased its investment in this area, the Council on The Ageing (COTA) estimates that a further 30,000 packages need to be released immediately to help relieve tension in the home care sector.²⁷ The Productivity Commission has also warned that:²⁸

- One-third of elderly Australians who need help to live at home say they don't get the assistance they need.
- The average wait time into residential care in 2017-18 has increased by 44% over the previous two years.
- The percentage of primary carers satisfied with their government help has dropped, with less than half of carers satisfied with the range of services.

The Committee believes that one outcome of the upcoming Royal Commission into Aged Care should be that federal funding for Home Care Packages be increased, with priority given to closing the gap for care packages targeted at those with higher needs and disabilities. In delivering this increase, the Australian Government should anticipate additional uptake from measures taken to increase the supply of home modifications in the rental sector. The Government should also review whether the existing offering of packages is providing the diversity of services expected from both recipients and carers.

Beyond modifications to existing homes, it would also be beneficial for federal and state governments to consider how new housing supply can be developed in a way that makes it easier to retrofit at a future date, both for older individuals and for people living with dementia. At the state level, this should involve a re-examination of the NSW Apartment Design Guidelines. Such a review need not focus on making every new dwelling ageing and disability friendly. However, apartments should be designed in such a way that ensures that potential future retrofits are possible.

26 2GB, Elderly home care waiting lists jump 40%

27 Community Care Review, 10,000 home care packages funded in \$550 million aged care boost

28 Productivity Commission, 2019 Report on Government Services



Image: University of Wollongong, Desert Rose

To demonstrate how such housing can be delivered in a sustainable and affordable manner, the University of Wollongong and TAFE NSW have spent the past two years designing, prototyping and building a housing model which caters for the needs of an ageing population, supporting people living with dementia and other age-related disabilities. The Desert Rose prototype was so well developed that it was awarded second place in an international sustainability competition in Dubai. The Committee suggests that developers and retirement villages would do well to consider the design features of this prototype when developing future housing stock.²⁹

Ageing-friendly design is important because it reduces costs for government, which would otherwise need to provide even larger subsidies to relocate people into aged care facilities at an earlier age. This is significant, because the ongoing shortfall in Home Care Packages is resulting in individuals being forced into residential aged-care facilities prematurely – further compounding the challenges facing that sector.³⁰ 41% of residential aged care providers reported a loss during the September 2018 quarter, while the proportion of facilities making a cash loss is up substantially from the same period in 2017.³¹ As such, investments in boosting the number of Home Care Packages is both fiscally prudent and socially desirable. Equally, good housing and apartment design can reduce the future retrofitting cost while extending the length of time that an individual can age in place.

A final area where the humble home owner can provide a solution to a broader policy challenge is in the area of co-living. During the research stage of this report, the Committee worked closely with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) on an examination of adaptive co-living as one option to provide safe and affordable housing for the renting retiree. While TACSI's work in this space is ongoing, this report suggests that there should be further examination of incentives to encourage empty nesters to make their spare rooms available for renting retirees through dedicated co-sharing arrangements. This could be particularly beneficial for older retired women who for financial reasons might be unable to afford their own rental property, and which if given a choice, would prefer not to live in a share-house with substantially younger tenants.

The principle underpinning such an approach already exists. AirBnB currently partners with the NSW Government to offer those with a NSW Seniors Card a \$100 cash reward for becoming a new host. This program has delivered a useful revenue stream for retired home owners to support their retirement, while also supplying more supply in the short-term letting market. Such programs are also useful given that many seniors visiting Sydney may prefer to source their holiday accommodation from other seniors.

²⁹ University of Wollongong Australia, Desert Rose blooms after taking out second place with sustainable, age-friendly house

³⁰ Older Persons Advocacy Network

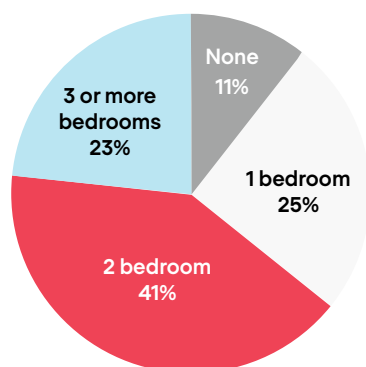
³¹ Aged Care Financial Performance Survey

Aged care and retirement villages: two different industries facing similar barriers to success

Entirely separate to the challenges associated with ageing in place and aged care are questions surrounding the growing demand for retirement village living. There is a common misconception that retirement villages and aged care facilities are the same thing, though the reality is that retirement villages and aged care are designed for different stages of life and different people. Retirement village residents live independently, while residential aged care residents require daily assistance with personal care. While some retirement villages may be on the same site as aged care facilities, the payment structure for aged care is notably different to that of residential care, and the regulation surrounding both sectors is entirely different.

Retirement villages exist to provide an alternative housing choice for people aged 55 years or older through accommodation which also offers a range of health, leisure and support services. In a city like Sydney, where the equivalent of 20 years of housing supply is currently tied up in unoccupied empty bedrooms, it makes sense to promote a housing sector which provides a way for asset rich but cash poor retirees to downsize out of the family home.³² A gargantuan 89% of people aged 50 or over have a spare bedroom available in their current home.³³

How many "spare" bedrooms do you have in your current home?



Source: LJ Hooker, *The Downsizing Dilemma*

Both the aged care sector and the retirement village sector are inhibited by existing rules which act as a disincentive to downsizing out of the family home. This is because when you qualify for the Age Pension, your home is not counted as an asset. However, if you make a profit when you sell your home and downsize to a cheaper option, some of the profit may be taken into account when Centrelink calculates your Age Pension.

The Committee agrees with the Productivity Commission that the federal government should establish an age pensioners savings account scheme that would be made available to age pensioners for investing any surplus funds from the sale of the principal residence — and for those funds to be exempt from the Age Pension assets and income tests.³⁴ These funds could be drawn upon to fund living costs, retirement village costs, aged care and other expenses.

The Aged Care Royal Commission also provides a good opportunity for the government to examine the financial viability of the broader retirement sector, though it remains likely that government spending will need to increase in this space. It is concerning that spending on nursing homes per capita has fallen for the first time in half a decade while wait times had more than doubled in a single year.³⁵ While the federal government's expansion of funding announced alongside the commencement of the Royal Commission is a welcome step towards reversing this decline, with 41% of residential aged care providers having reported a loss during the September 2018 quarter, more funding and reform to enhance sectoral viability is likely to be necessary and should nonetheless be considered as part of the Royal Commission's investigation.³⁶

Beyond the broader question of the financial viability of the retirement sector, new evidence suggests that there is a geographical mismatch between where retirement living supply is delivered and where the demand is. The Committee for Sydney's report on *Seeing the City* identified that at present, the only SA2 area within Greater Sydney where individuals aged 75 or over are the most predominant age group, is the area surrounding Castle Hill East.³⁷ This is largely due to the high concentration of senior living facilities within that suburb. If our intention is to provide dignity and choice

³² Sydney Morning Herald, Twenty years of Sydney housing supply locked up in spare rooms

³³ The Downsizing Dilemma

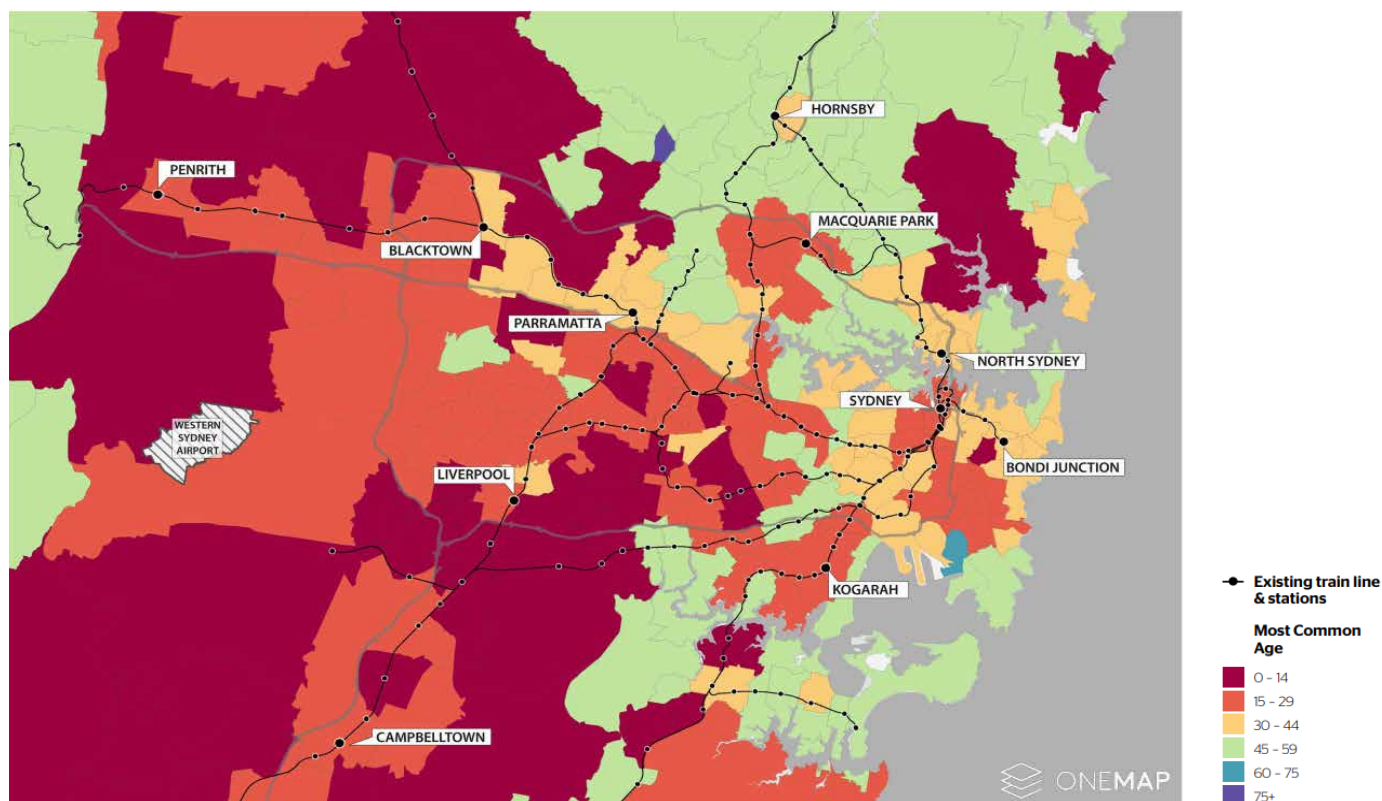
³⁴ Productivity Commission: Caring for Older Australians

³⁵ Productivity Commission 2019 Report on Government Services

³⁶ Aged Care Financial Performance Survey

³⁷ Committee for Sydney, *Seeing the City*

Most common age demographic by region



This map reflects what we know about lifecycle stages and how they shape housing choice. 'Young workers', that is persons aged 15–29 and 30–44 are concentrated in high rental areas with good accessibility to jobs. Meanwhile, households with young children (0–14) are found in the more affordable outer suburban areas. Older people are primarily on the Northern side of the harbour.

in retirement location, it is evident that Sydney's existing suburbs will need to be more accommodating of aged care retirement village developments.

Two of the major challenges holding back the sector from delivering this supply are a growing level of community opposition to new retirement-oriented development, and a shortage of appropriate land for delivering new facilities within established suburbs.

The Committee is concerned that some local councils have fallen prey to anti-development populist opposition, resulting in a remarkable situation where aged care and retirement villages are repeatedly snubbed on the basis that they do not fit the existing character of the neighbourhood.³⁸ Most concerning, this has filtered up to a state government level, with the NSW Government announcing in October 2018 that it would amend the Seniors Housing State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) to "protect the local character of an area" by keeping "the intrusive incremental creep of seniors' housing developments in check".³⁹

The Committee is concerned by the language used to describe seniors' housing development and cautions both state and local government to avoid prioritising the lifestyle preferences of select local opponents over the very real need to tackle the imminent and large surge in demand for retirement villages and aged care facilities.

The Committee notes that Objective 11 of that the Greater Sydney Commission's Greater Sydney Region Plan is to deliver more housing diversity and choice.⁴⁰ For Sydney to be considered an all ages-inclusive city, this objective will need to be embraced by providing a diversity of retirement living options for our senior residents and by synchronising SEPPs to meet that objective. Indeed, many of today's opponents may appreciate ageing options in their local area in the years to come.

A second challenge is the limited amount of brownfield land available for providing new retirement facilities. The industry is attempting to respond to this through the provision of multi-storey facilities, which has unfortunately exacerbated community opposition to retirement-oriented development. An earlier decision by the Brisbane City Council to provide height incentives for developers to provide 1,000 new aged care and retirement rooms was abandoned following sustained community opposition.⁴¹ Such decisions undermine a city's inclusivity for older residents, by denying them choice and dignity in retirement location.

By restricting supply that matches the locational preferences of older residents, the city is denying itself a double benefit, both from the provision of badly needed residential care and from the additional capacity freed up through downsizing. Survey data has confirmed that location is the most important factor considered when downsizing, while size is the least

³⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, 'Inappropriate development': Retirement village proposals rile mayors

³⁹ Department of Planning & Environment, New seniors housing planning rules to benefit all

⁴⁰ Greater Sydney Commission Greater Sydney Region Master Plan, Objective 11

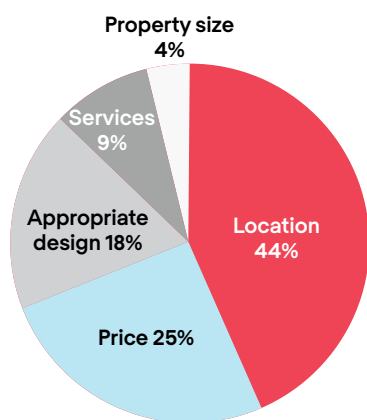
⁴¹ Brisbane times, Council to stop developers building on privately owned sporting land



Image: Stockland's Epping Retirement Village Development

important factor.⁴² The occupation of large family homes by one- or two-person retiree households in areas that are often close to employment and services is a key contributor to the housing affordability challenge.

What is the most important factor in choosing a property to downsize into?



Source: LJ Hooker, *The Downsizing Dilemma*

While both the aged care and retirement villages play a critical role in the delivery of housing for Sydney's ageing residents, any reforms undertaken to support the retirement village sector will have catalysing benefits that accrue by delaying the entry date of people into a higher-care setting supplied by the aged care sector. By strengthening our retirement village, policy makers free up fiscal capacity to reinvest into aged care.

For policy makers concerned about the delivery of a 30-minute city, boosting retirement living diversity in areas of existing demand is also a sensible outcome. Overcoming these barriers will benefit government as well. In its review of the retirement village sector, Grant Thornton identified

substantial savings for the government arising from the existence of retirement living facilities including:⁴³

- Reduced aged care expenditure of \$1.98 billion per annum through retirement villages delaying the entry of residents into aged care services
- A minimum of \$177 million saved in health care expenditure every year as a result of residents requiring fewer hospital and GP visits.

Retirement villages can also be designed with broader community benefits in mind. Stockland's partnership with the Catholic Diocese to provide a development that joins together a retirement village and a school in Epping is one such example of how mixed communities can be developed through partnerships between the private sector and the non-profit sector. The development will see the creation of a new multi-aged precinct which includes:⁴⁴

- A one-stream primary school with provision for expansion
- A new residential community including 200 independent retirement living apartments, and 132-bed residential aged care facility
- Retail space
- Open space

Given the lack of free land available in Sydney's established suburbs, such partnerships present an innovative way to provide a welcome benefit to the community while also helping to provide new retirement living choice in areas where shortfalls presently exist.

42 The Downsizing Dilemma

43 Grant Thornton, National Overview of the retirement village sector
 44 Stockland enters agreement with the Catholic Church for mixed use community in Epping

CONSEQUENCES OF LESS RETIREES MOVING INTO RETIREMENT LIVING

4.9% of retirees in NSW move into retirement living, compared to the national average of 5.7%.



Fewer retirees living in custom-built Retirement Living dwellings



Reduced access to services, social connections, sense of community and well-being



Retirees entering aged care on average 5 years sooner than those living in Retirement Living



Health and aged care costs to Federal and State Governments continue to grow



Fewer established homes available to address broader housing supply and affordability



Less jobs created in construction and operations of Retirement Living villages

Bringing NSW and the ACT up to the national average would provide savings of \$650 million.

Source: Stockland submission to the Greater Sydney Commission Draft District Plans

However, even in those areas where community opposition is neutralised through innovative partnerships, substantial viability challenges remain. The retirement living sector finds it difficult to compete with mainstream property developers for sites, largely because it faces a range of costs that other developers do not. These include:

- The need to provide more accessible and adaptable designs
- Compliance with the requirements of the Retirement Living Act and Seniors Housing SEPP
- Larger average unit sizes (reducing yield)
- The provision of community infrastructure, communal and in-house medical facilities, all of which increases construction costs.

These additional costs and design requirements directly impact on the competitiveness of this sector and result in retirement village providers often being priced out of the market for potential new sites. This is especially true in locations that are desirable as large-scale apartment, townhouse or mixed-use developments, which is often where the greater demand to age in place is found.

As identified in Stockland's submission to the Greater Sydney Commission Draft greater Sydney Region Plan, this failure to deliver retirement living supply is now resulting in indirect negative consequences for the state of New South Wales.⁴⁵

Retirement living is social infrastructure, and while it is generally provided by the private sector, it must be planned for much in the same way a park or school is planned. As with the delivery of all social infrastructure, planning for growth in the retirement living sector will require coordinated actions across multiple layers of government. The Greater Sydney Commission should develop a retirement living plan and toolkit to be assist councils in preparing local housing strategies for seniors. This toolkit should provide clear direction on zoning and planning reform to move away from a development preference for "highest and best use", while identifying other reforms to ensure that retirement living can remain both a viable option for developers and a competitive land use.

Delivering a sufficient scale of retirement living supply to ensure dignity and choice across Sydney is also unlikely to occur in an environment where the same planning controls which apply to standard residential development are also applied to retirement-oriented development. Planning controls should be relaxed for developments which already provide community serving infrastructure internally. Parking minimums for retirement living and aged care facilities should be sharply reduced, in part because the demographic being serviced typically have a lower rate of car-use than standard developments, but also because the rise of shared mobility and mobility-as-a-service is now providing a more safe, reliable and viable alternative to the high costs associated with ongoing car ownership.

⁴⁵ Stockland submission to the Greater Sydney Commission

RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal Treasury

- Encourage downsizing by establishing an age pensioners savings account scheme that would be made available to age pensioners for investing any surplus funds from the sale of the principal residence and for those funds to be exempt from the Age Pension assets and income tests. This fund would be made available to fund aged care and retirement village costs.

Federal Department of Health

- Increase per capita spending on aged care facilities, while working with industry to identify how to improve the sector's financial viability.
- Increase the number of Home Care Packages on offer with priority given to closing the gap for care packages targeted at those with higher needs and disabilities.
- Ensure that a sufficient number of Home Care Packages are available to support the needs of a growing number of Australians living with dementia.

NSW Department of Planning and Environment:

- Ensure that inclusionary zoning policies take into consideration the need to design some social housing for financially disadvantaged renting retirees.
- Change tenancy legislation, placing the onus on landlords to justify why federal government funded ageing-friendly home modifications should not be allowed to occur.

- Update the NSW Apartment Design Guidelines to encourage design that is more ageing and disability friendly or more easily retrofittable to become ageing friendly.
- Conduct a review into incentives for co-living arrangements to boost affordable rental supply for the financially disadvantaged renting retiree.
- Amend the Retirement Living Act and Seniors Housing SEPP to facilitate an easier pathway to development for retirement villages and aged care facilities.

NSW Family and Community Services

- Audit the state's public housing stock to determine what proportion is appropriate in scale and design to meet the forecast growth in people living with dementia.

NSW Local Councils

- Include in future Local Plans steps to ensure that each community will support an ageing population to age in place. This should include considering aged care and retirement living.
- Relax planning controls for retirement living and aged care developments which already provide community servicing infrastructure internally.
- Reduce parking minimums for retirement living and aged care facilities.
- Consider the provision of on-site amenities in setting the level of developer contributions in planning policies for retirement villages that support people with dementia and/or developments that co-locate retirement villages and residential aged care facilities that incorporate dementia-friendly design and environments.



Transport to keep us socially connected and healthy

To develop Sydney into a socially connected, ageing-inclusive city, policymakers will need to ensure that the transport links which hold it together are appropriately designed to service the needs of its senior citizens. This is particularly important given the need to prevent social isolation amongst the growing number of residents who will be unable to, or who choose not to, drive.

According to the *NSW Intergenerational Report*, a full 42% of NSW's population will fall outside the working age bracket of 15-64 by 2056.⁴⁶ In the more immediate-term, many baby boomers are on the cusp of exiting the job market, which will result in a substantial shift in transit behaviours for a substantial component of the population. At present, much of our transport spending continues to focus heavily on worker journeys to the city, and while such investments are both necessary and welcome, ongoing consideration will need to be given to the evolving transit needs of the ageing population.

Research has confirmed that the vast majority of older Australians want to remain mobile and live independently at home, but accessing transport is proving confusing and challenging for many – with insufficient public transport entrenching dependency on family or community services.⁴⁷ Two consistently listed reasons that older residents don't use public transport more often are that it is not convenient and that it doesn't take them to where they need to go.⁴⁸ Survey data from the UK has found that seniors often find it difficult

to access their GP or public health services using the existing public transport network. Survey respondents who cited this difficulty often also had substantially worse health outcomes than those who didn't respond in this manner.⁴⁹

This matches local experience by Transdev, which found that the number one reason consumers cited for using their transport on demand, point-to-point trial in Sydney was to access a local GP, with visits to social or entertainment destinations a distant second. For these users, transport on demand was a game changer for their public health and quality of life, delivering a substantial improvement on the existing, fixed public transport network. By enabling greater access to GPs and health services, larger healthcare costs in the future can be mitigated through early recognition and intervention.

Transdev's global Mobility Lab has identified another area where transport on demand can help provide additional benefits for seniors. Transdev's paper on Mobility for an Ageing Population rightly identified that for some senior citizens:⁵⁰

"The car is the tool that permits that freedom. They are very attached to it. To abandon the car is a sign of physical decline, almost of "social death".

46 NSW Intergenerational Report

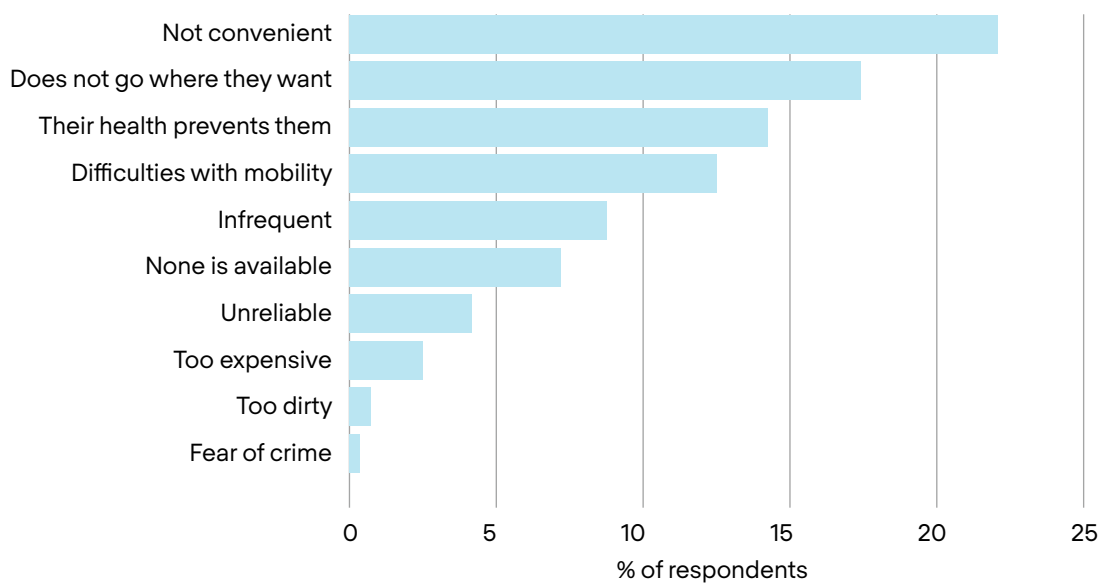
47 SBS News, Elderly struggle with transport: research

48 International Longevity Centre in the UK, *The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society*

49 Ibid.

50 Transdev Lab, *Mobility for an Ageing Population*

Reasons for not using public transport given by those over 65



Source: International Longevity Centre, *The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society*

But it is not the physical loss of the car which concerns seniors so much as the dignity and choice to travel with ease to the same destinations as anybody else. Transdev’s Mobility Lab noted that:⁵¹

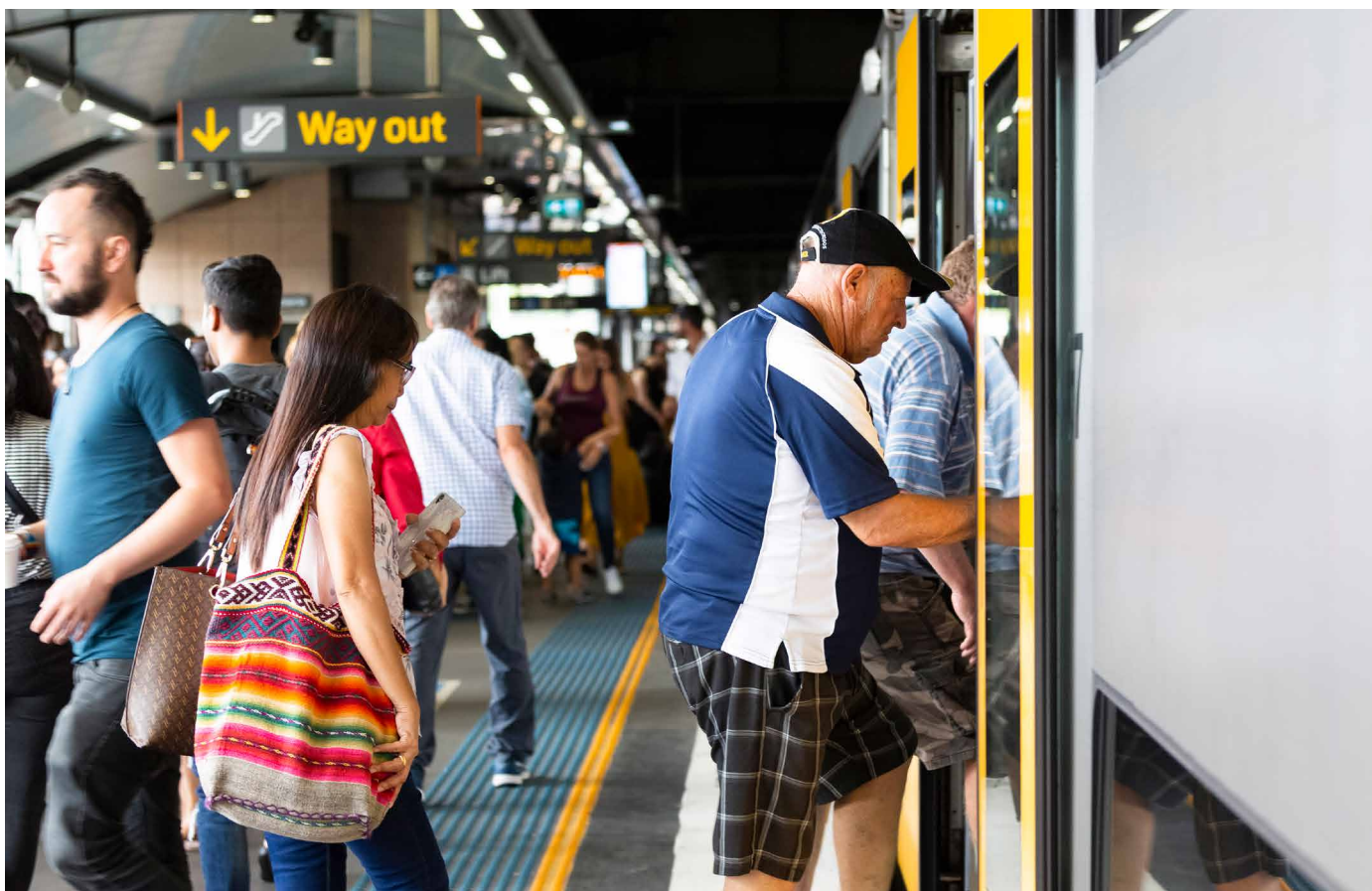
“The elderly no longer want to be shut away, they want access to social and cultural life, to be subject to the same requirements as everyone else and to benefit from public services. What is fundamental from their point of view is to be able to choose and not to be captive.”

In this respect, it is not so much the car itself that seniors value, but the social and cultural connections that it enables. New transport on demand services being trialled by Transdev in parts of New South Wales provide an alternative transit mode for senior citizens wanting to engage with the social and cultural life of Sydney. As is identified in a later section of this report, a series of critical healthcare indicators for the elderly are directly influenced by each individual’s level of social isolation and its commensurate rates of loneliness and depression. In that sense, while transport on demand’s most obvious impact on the health budget may come from

increased accessibility to GPs and medical professionals, an equally important health benefit can be found in the enhancement of social connections and its associated improvements in physical and mental wellbeing.

The potential for mobility-as-a-service and transport-on-demand systems to act as social connectors, especially for those who are no longer in possession of their drivers’ license or who are less confident with their driving skills, needs to be acknowledged by the NSW Government as it evaluates the transport on demand trials currently underway in Sydney. The NSW Government should work with service providers including Transdev and Keolis Downer to conduct a deeper analysis of additional trips taken for medical or social purposes which otherwise may not have occurred without a transport on demand offering. It should then gather survey data to determine whether consumers who use transport on demand services for those purposes also believe that the availability of these services will deliver better physical and mental health outcomes as a result.

51 Ibid



Even with the evolution of transport on demand and mobility as a service, it remains likely that elderly residents will also to some degree continue to use traditional public transport infrastructure. This will remain true particularly for so long as there remains an insufficient level of subsidy for transport on demand operators to provide their services at a price point that is accessible to less financially advantaged seniors. For those citizens who continue to rely on traditional public transport, services will need to be designed with an adequate level of accessibility. Specifically, public transport will need to be adaptable and designed to respond to older people's needs. With regards to accessibility, this will need to include a move towards more universal access to low floor buses, as well as raised platforms for stops across all public transport modes. Safety will need to be prioritised during on-boarding and disembarking to minimise falls, while signage and information will need to be displayed clearly and ideally with an audio assistance option to assist the visually impaired.

When delivering public transport, the NSW Government should apply the following principles developed by Arup for Europe but which are equally applicable in Sydney:⁵²

1. Urban planning and transport planning must be effectively integrated to adequately respond to the actual mobility needs of an ageing population.
2. The urban environment must be safe, regular, well designed and connected and free from physical barriers.

3. Traffic management systems must be integrated, dynamic (demand-responsive) and easily manageable.
4. Digital tools will need to be populated amongst senior demographics to enable greater awareness of available transport.
5. Public transport will need to be attractive, safe and comfortable.

Arup also recommends that permeability and public transport stops density should assume a general reduction in average walking speeds and distances.

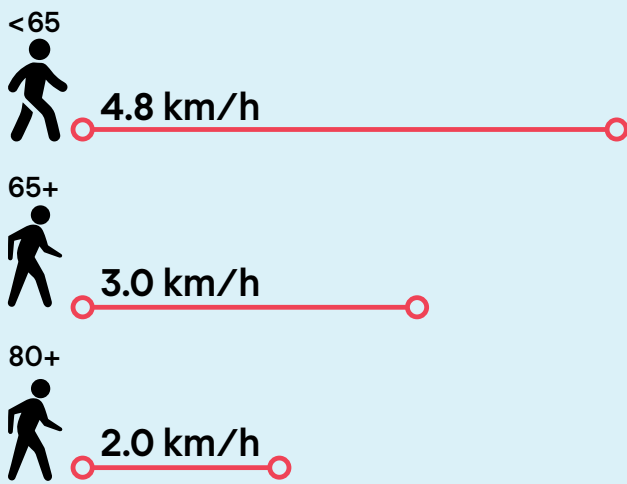
More broadly, town planners will also need to be cognisant of the slower walking speeds of older Australians when attempting to design more walkable suburbs and town centres. The average walking speed of an average adult is some 4.8km/h, for people aged 65+ the average drops to just 3.0km/h, while for people aged 80+ it falls further to 2.0km/h.⁵³

Older residents also need more places to stop and rest, and a failure to provide appropriate seating along popular walking routes is likely to further disincentivise active ageing and worsen health outcomes across Sydney's community of seniors.

⁵² Arup, Shaping Ageing Cities

⁵³ Ibid.

Slower walking speeds of older people reduces their access to local amenities and public transport



Source: Arup, *Shaping Ageing Cities*

Even within well designed, walkable, many seniors still remain socially isolated because of a lack of access to public transport which would enable them to travel longer distances to places of social activity. A recent Infrastructure Australia report identified that within Greater Sydney, there were over one million people in the outer suburbs who had zero access to reliable public transport routes within 400 metres of their place of residence.⁵⁴ For ageing Sydney residents who wish to age-in-place in these suburbs, a dearth of frequent public transport threatens to compound social isolation once individuals are no longer capable of driving. This is particularly problematic when you consider the reality that a growing number of renting retirees are at risk of being forced into these locations through financial disadvantage and a lack of affordable rental supply in other parts of the city. Additional investment in bus networks could theoretically expand the number of services to those outer suburbs, but it remains unlikely that such networks will be able to densely cover the entirety of Sydney's geographic plain without either sacrificing frequency and reliability, or by substantially increasing costs to the taxpayer.

Some of these challenges can be resolved by making it easier for seniors to downsize to areas with better proximity to traditional services, but for others who are unable or willing to do so, transport-on-demand is likely to take on greater importance. In that respect, the Committee commends Transdev, Keolis Downer and Transport for NSW for their ongoing trials of transport-on-demand services. Such services are already proving very popular with older demographics and are likely to prove even more important in those areas where public transport alternatives are scant. As is the case with other public transport, this form of transport is likely to require an ongoing level of subsidy from the NSW Government, particularly to ensure that services remain affordable for financially disadvantaged seniors. As identified earlier within this section, the costs of providing such services should not be viewed on a purely fare-recovery basis, and investment in transport on demand should be viewed more broadly as a tool to tackle social isolation and loneliness, while also expanding access to important GP services, which can help reduce pipeline healthcare costs through early intervention.

In the longer term, the arrival of fully automated vehicles will enhance the capacity of Sydney's ageing residents to access a more diverse range of areas in Sydney, especially as they move beyond an age at which they might typically lose access to their license. The Committee welcomes the release of the Future Transport 2056 *Connected and Automated Vehicles Plan*, and suggests that as an evolving document, Transport for NSW should develop more targeted research which identifies the potential transport needs of an ageing population in the era of increasing automation.⁵⁵ As this technology is developed, the NSW Government will also need to consider how it can ensure that such mobility is made accessible to senior citizens of all income brackets, as part of a broader, equitably and inclusive strategy to tackle social isolation and expand access to health services.

54 *The Extent of Public Transport Disadvantage in Australian Cities*

55 Transport for NSW, *Connected and Automated Vehicles Plan*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transport for NSW

- Work with transport on demand trial providers to quantify the number of additional trips taken by elderly residents for medical or social purposes and which may not have occurred without a transport on demand offering.
- Ensure that public transport infrastructure and vehicles are adaptable and designed to respond to the accessibility needs of older individuals.
- Set a target to expand public transport accessibility and frequency in areas with high numbers of individuals aged 70 and over, including on the outer fringe of Sydney where public transport offerings are already sparse.



Planning principles for inclusive public spaces

The Committee for Sydney has long been an advocate for urban renewal as an avenue to better public spaces. Such concepts were first fleshed out in our landmark report on *Making Great Places: Density Done Well*.⁵⁶ In 2018, the Committee expanded on this viewpoint with the release of *Re-Balancing the City: Town Centre Renewal for Sydney*.⁵⁷ In 2019, this conversation will be expanded further with new research which applies the principles of *Density Done Well* to Sydney's existing suburbs. Underlying all of this research is an ongoing belief in the importance of inclusive public realm and amenity as a necessary precursor to securing community support for development and urban renewal.

This belief is also reflected in the Committee for Sydney's decision to form the Good Growth Alliance alongside the Community Housing Industry Association of NSW, the Sydney Business Chamber, Homelessness NSW, the Property Council and Shelter NSW.⁵⁸ Throughout 2019, the Committee will work with this group by demonstrating the benefits of inclusivity-led and great, place-based housing growth as critical to Sydney's development.

This paper notes that great public spaces improve amenity for all users and not just older residents, though it is seniors who feel the failures of design most acutely. Many of the planning principles required to deliver an ageing-inclusive city have substantive value for the broader community and

are worth pursuing in their own right. For example, the NSW Government has unveiled a policy to increase Sydney's tree canopy cover from 16% to 40% by 2030 as part of its Five Million Trees initiative.⁵⁹ While all residents will benefit from additional shading and a corresponding reduction in peak temperature during summertime, the benefit will be even more significant for Sydney's ageing residents.

Other planning decisions taken by local and state government to assist the elderly will also come with ancillary benefits for the community. Levelled street-walks, more frequent and accessible resting areas in public spaces, safe and secure pedestrian environments, a greater provision of recreation and public facilities, parks and trails will all help to deliver an ageing-inclusive environment with broader benefits for the community.

To assist councils in the delivery of age-inclusive places, COTA NSW has produced a list of *Basic Principles for Age-Friendly Environments*.⁶⁰ The principles document provides not just a list of outcomes to achieve, but also a list of common outcomes to avoid when planning public spaces, specifically with regards to footpaths, seating, wayfinding and signage, toilets, and lighting. Some of these are replicated below.

A selection of basic design principles for age-friendly environments

	Foothpaths	Seating	Wayfinding	Toilets	Lighting
To do	Wide enough for two mobility devices Street crossings at same level as footpath	At regular intervals Protected from the elements Accessible for people with wheelchairs	Large lettering, colour contrast & plain fonts Continuously placed if leading to a location from a distance	Toilet height and hand rails should meet AS1428 requirements One unisex toilet to allow carers to assist	Even and placed to minimise strips of light across surfaces Good lighting after dark
To avoid	Gravel or loose surfaces Trip hazards Shared spaces with cyclists or scooters	Seats without arm rests Seats set too low Not good for larger people	Placing wayfinding signs where there is a lot of visual 'noise' Heritage-style fonts	Locking accessible toilets Gravel or uneven paths from the main path of travel.	Placing trees and shrubs where they will grow under a light source. Reflective surfaces

Source: COTA NSW: *Basic Principles for Age-Friendly Environments*

⁵⁶ Committee for Sydney, *Making Great Places: Density Done Well*

⁵⁷ Committee for Sydney, *Re-Balancing the City: Town Centre Renewal for Sydney*

⁵⁸ Good Growth Alliance, *A Better Sydney and Stronger NSW*

⁵⁹ NSW Government, *Five Million Trees for a greener Sydney by 2030*

⁶⁰ COTA NSW: *Basic Principles for Age-Friendly Environments*

Landcom's *Open Space Design Guidelines* also provide useful design principles relevant to age-friendly design for open space areas and liveable communities.⁶¹ Such tools can be adapted for use by council staff in assessing public domain plans, open space plans, and for devising suitable questions for consultation with the community about proposed open space design.

Another important placemaking principle is the importance of recognising that spaces are shared and best delivered when they are inclusive to all. The Heart Foundation NSW has identified that as seniors continue to age, they become less confident walking in their local neighbourhood due to fears that they might fall, particularly in areas where bicycles are present.⁶² This is likely to become an even greater risk as motorised scooters and bicycles grow in popularity. To ensure that our public spaces are inclusive for both senior citizens and other active transport users, both local and state government should coordinate on the more rapid delivery of separated, dedicated bike lanes which should also be made available to electric scooters and electric skateboards. Such investments should no longer be viewed as being purely beneficial to the cyclists themselves and will need to be viewed in the context of protecting safe walkways and spaces for an increasingly ageing demographic. By failing to invest in this infrastructure, policy makers risk delivering poorer health outcomes for two separate demographics, while at the same time undermining the development of our public spaces as socially inclusive spaces for all Sydney residents.

Indeed, the NSW Government's \$290 million investment in parks and open spaces across Sydney is unlikely to be as successful as it otherwise could be unless the NSW Government is able to take commensurate action to make sure that Sydney's senior residents feel safe during the short walk from their place of residence to these locations.⁶³ To address this, the Greater Sydney Commission should work with local councils during the development of their ageing strategies to identify whether there are sufficient safe and walkable pathways for residents to access these new and improved open spaces. Attempts to connect the Government Architect of New South Wales' proposed Green Grid with dedicated cycle ways should also be undertaken with a view

to ensuring separate and distinct pathways for cyclists and seniors, without unduly depriving either group of access to public open space.⁶⁴

As a more immediate priority, local councils should also adopt the following recommendations from the *LGNSW Toolkit*:⁶⁵

- **Undertake a review of the age-friendliness of council infrastructure, facilities, libraries and waste management** – This could be done by using Walk and Talk or other accessibility assessment tools to assess satisfaction of older people to determine conditions/age-friendliness.
- **Create age-friendly local planning controls** – This would ideally include age-friendly aims, objectives and strategies being embedded into local planning controls.
- **Prepare age-friendly Master Plans, Public Domain Plans and Urban Design Plans** – These should provide input on urban design considerations for age-friendly environments. Ideally these would be developed with input from urban designers and landscape architects who are trained in understanding older people's needs in the outdoor areas and interface with buildings.

During the implementation of these recommendations, local councils should seek to consult with the seniors within their community to ensure that any audit reforms are appropriately citizen-led.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NSW Local Councils:

- Plan public spaces in accordance with COTA NSW's Basic Principles for Age-Friendly Environments and Local Government NSW's Integrated Age-Friendly Planning Toolkit.
- Conduct an audit to identify deficits in shading and seating availability, particularly in those areas with close proximity to destinations that are attractive to elderly residents such as shops, the library, toilets and bus stops.

61 Landcom, *Open Space Design Guidelines*

62 Noted during consultation with the Heart Foundation NSW as part of the research for this paper

63 NSW Government, \$290 million for more green and open spaces

64 Government Architect of NSW, Sydney Green Grid

65 Local Government NSW Toolkit

Healthy and active ageing

Both the federal and the NSW Intergenerational Report have identified substantial costs associated with the ageing of the population, the largest of which is a forecast increase in health costs. Average health expenses per person aged over 65 is around three times higher than those aged 65 or under, highlighting the need to encourage a lifestyle which involves more preventative active ageing habits. This conclusion is supported by the World Health Organisation's 2015 *World report on ageing and health*, which emphasised that all the aspects of an older person's environment need to work together in an integrated way if healthy ageing is to be achieved.⁶⁶

Place Design Group considered the challenge of healthy and active communities as part of its 2016 research on *Age Friendly Cities in Australia*.⁶⁷ The paper correctly identified the importance of walkable suburbs for encouraging active ageing, singling out the importance of protecting green space to deliver intergenerational walkability across our suburbs. The Place Design Group research also identified a particularly noteworthy initiative by the City of Boroondara in Victoria, which implemented a "Walk, Rest and Talk"

City of Boroondara's Walk, Rest and Talk initiative



Source: Place Design Group, *Age Friendly Cities in Australia*

initiative to provide a pedestrian friendly, safe walking circuit in the city, with seating on route, maps in four languages, and links to common destinations for elderly residents such as shops, the library, toilets and bus stops.⁶⁸

For councils seeking to leverage their existing local parkland to deliver better health results for an ageing community, research has found that outdoor exercise parks specifically designed for seniors can help them better enjoy life and can substantially improve muscle strength, balance, and physical function, which are all risk factors for falls.⁶⁹ Research also recommends that these exercise parks be co-located with children's playgrounds so that grandparents can exercise while supervising their grandkids and vice versa.⁷⁰

Even if the infrastructure is in place to encourage active ageing, there will need to be a targeted strategy to encourage and promote more active lifestyles. On this front, the Australian Government's recently announced *Better Ageing Grants* are a step in the right direction and worthy of continuation.⁷¹

State and local government would also do well to partner with industry and community organisations to deliver more programs for older Australians that encourage physical activity and wellbeing. While this could include some degree of public subsidy for local pools or gymnasiums to provide affordable seniors programs, it is also true that you can encourage a more active lifestyle simply by providing more ageing friendly activities and events within the community, which will also have the dual benefit of reducing social isolation.

68 City of Boroondara, Walk, Rest and Talk

69 Journal of Ageing and Health, A novel exercise initiative for seniors to improve balance and physical function

70 Ibid.

71 Australian Institute of Sports, Better Ageing Grants

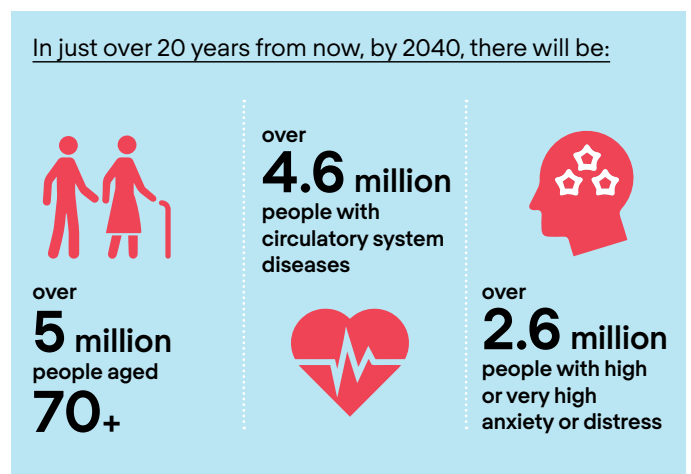
The NSW Government should also expand the *Active Living* NSW partnership between the NSW Ministry of Health and the Heart Foundation NSW branch to include additional resources that are specifically targeted at delivering better outcome for ageing citizens. The NSW Government and Local Government NSW should also work with the Heart Foundation to develop a *Healthy by Design* program modelled on the successful Victorian initiative.⁷² Such a program would have the added benefit of broader health benefits for all members of the community.

Finally, both federal and state governments would do well to acknowledge the findings of recent PwC research which warned that Australia's health and ageing sectors couldn't simply be 'scaled' up to meet growing demand, nor would this secure the best outcomes for those cared for within the system.⁷³

PwC warned that such an approach would quickly swamp government budgets and has instead suggested a series of practical actions and innovations, including that governments:

"Transform the system towards a more holistic and outcomes focussed approach, making better use of prevention and early intervention, all underpinned by future demand and demographics – looking after people closer to their homes and communities, focussing and organising around outcomes that matters to them (physical, mental health, social, financial etc.)"

Such a recommendation is consistent with the other recommendations in this report, which seek to encourage governments at all levels to evaluate their programs as part of a holistic response to making Sydney inclusive for an ageing population.



Source: PwC, *Practical Innovation: Closing the Social Infrastructure Gap in Health and Ageing*

RECOMMENDATIONS

NSW Ministry of Health

- Expand the Active Living NSW partnership between the NSW Ministry of Health and the National Heart Foundation NSW branch to include additional resources specifically targeted at delivering better outcome for seniors.

NSW Local Councils

- Invest in seniors-friendly exercise facilities in public parks, ideally co-located near children's playgrounds.
- Provide safe and walkable pathways for senior citizens that are separated out from car and bicycle infrastructure.

⁷² Heart Foundation, *Healthy by Design*

⁷³ PwC, *Practical Innovation: Closing the Social Infrastructure Gap in Health and Ageing*

Fostering social connection and good mental health

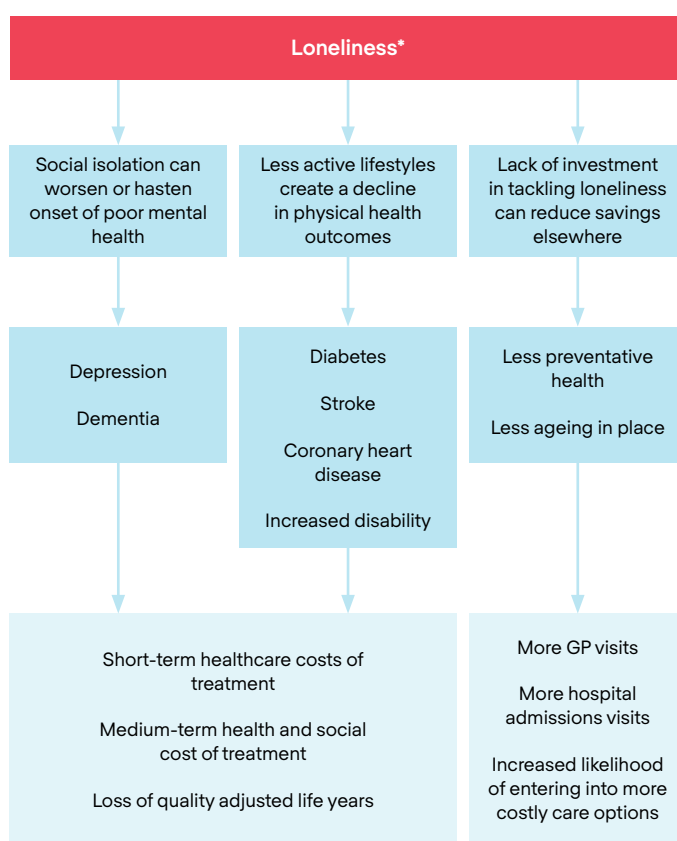
As has been highlighted numerous times throughout this paper, one of the most substantial challenges that Sydney will need to confront as its population continues to age is the risk of social isolation and loneliness amongst an increasingly large component of the city's population.

When people leave the workforce and enter the retirement stage of their lives, they often begin to experience social isolation and increased rates of loneliness. The incidence of loneliness typically increases with age, as life events result in a higher number of individuals living alone or without access to the same friendship circles which sustained them emotionally throughout much of their lives. No less than one-third of older individuals already experience either loneliness or severe loneliness.⁷⁴ COTA Australia predicts that the number of socially isolated people will more than double by 2040,⁷⁵ while international research has found that people who are socially isolated or lonely are also more likely to report risky health behaviours such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, and smoking.⁷⁶

Loneliness can also result in unexpected costs in other areas for government. People who classify as 'lonely' are 60% more likely to access emergency services than those who consider themselves 'non-lonely'.⁷⁷ That older individuals are visiting emergency departments not so much for serious medical problems but rather for the added social interactions provides a sad yet powerful demonstration as to why substantially more needs to be done to promote better mental health outcomes in the community.

Separate research from the UK has found that that a failure to tackle social isolation is now creating additional costs for government in other areas of the health budget.⁷⁸

The impact of loneliness and social isolation on public sector resources



Source: IoTUK, *Social Isolation and Loneliness in the UK*

74 Minister for Aged Care, Ken Wyatt AM, Speech to the Tackling Aged Care Mental Health & Social Isolation Conference

75 COTA, *Social Isolation: Its impact on the mental health and wellbeing of older Victorians*

76 Age and Ageing, *Social isolation and loneliness as risk factors for the progression of frailty*

77 Aged & Community Services Australia, *Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older Australians*

78 IoTUK, *Social Isolation and Loneliness in the UK*



To address the challenge of social isolation, Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) has recommended the development of programs which encourage older people to contribute meaningfully to others through volunteering activities. Other beneficial policies suggested by the research include offering classes in a local community centre where older residents can engage socially with others.⁷⁹

The Committee for Sydney encourages all levels of government to consider how they can support the growth of volunteerism across Sydney's ageing demographic, while Universities should be supported to embrace innovative ways to involve older residents in both learning and teaching in areas that sit outside the standard curriculum. In Lisbon, one University has expanded opportunities to people over the age of 50 to volunteer by offering free lectures on the arts or computer sciences. Lendlease has also announced a partnership with the University of Wollongong to build retirement living units on campus as part of a \$500 million state-of-the-art health and wellbeing precinct.⁸⁰ Similar opportunities should be considered by other universities.

Opportunities should also be examined for intergenerational learning beyond the university sphere. The mayor's design advisory group in London recently released a report

advocating for the creation of an "intergenerational start-up culture"⁸¹ that will connect experienced older people with younger entrepreneurs. Similar efforts should also be made locally to connect the wisdom and experience of older generations with the entrepreneurial enthusiasm of younger generations.

In West Australia, SGS Economics & Planning has taken on an advisory role in the delivery of multi-age precincts, drawing from successful programs used in both the Netherlands and Japan.⁸² Such precincts can be delivered by better connecting senior citizens with other, younger adults, but they can also come from connecting senior citizens to much younger demographics. Research has identified substantial social and economic benefits to projects which combine aged care and childcare programs, along with substantial improvements in participant wellbeing.⁸³ In a similar vein, BeyondBlue recommends programs which connect older adults and school children for mutual benefits, with senior Australians volunteering to help students with activities such as reading, literacy and numeracy.⁸⁴

This delivery of a broad range of social activities for seniors will be dependent on the availability of infrastructure to house those activities. For local councils seeking to promote

79 Aged & Community Services Australia, *Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older Australians*

80 Australian Financial Review, *Lendlease signs up to build on-campus retirement living*, March 27, 2019.

81 Mayor's Design Advisory Group, *Ageing London*

82 SGS Economics & Planning, *'MAPs in the City' series*

83 AJSI, *Intergenerational care as a viable intervention strategy for children at risk of delinquency*

84 BeyondBlue, *Connections Matter: Helping older people stay socially active*

more ageing-inclusive social engagement, it is especially important that they retain their community infrastructure assets. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg once highlighted the social importance of "third places"; those places where people spend time between their home ('first' place) and their work ('second' place), including libraries, parks, churches, recreation and health centres. These third places will become increasingly important as our population continues to age.⁸⁵

For social isolation to be tackled across the wealth spectrum and on an all-inclusive basis, it will also be important that social events in these spaces are not commercialised and made unaffordable or selectively available. While such facilities and programs are welcome when provided by local or state government, in other areas, charities are stepping up to the task. Across NSW, BaptistCare offers a series of centres that are supporting people living with disadvantage so they can address key issues including social and financial exclusion, mental health challenges, drug and alcohol dependence, and housing needs.⁸⁶ These centres also provide a valuable opportunity to connect with others in the local community.

However, meeting the challenge of tackling social isolation should not be the exclusive domain of charities. Local councils should also play a role in providing social events that are affordable and accessible to those who are financially disadvantaged. Effort should also be made to ensure that activities on offer are also accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Many of these events could be delivered in conjunction with the not-for-profit sector. One such example is the Riverwood Community Centre, which services 17 different cultures groups in the Canterbury Bankstown and Georges River areas. The non-profit centre partners with local councils as well as both the NSW and Australian Government to provide extensive services, activities, and facilities for children, young people, families, older people, people with a disability and community groups.⁸⁷

Not all individuals are extroverted or enjoy larger social gatherings. For these individuals, the risk of social isolation becomes more acute if they are living alone, for example, after the passing of a lifetime partner. For individuals in these circumstances and who are recipients of a Home Care package to age in place, the connection with their local carer is likely to be of significant importance. As such, it is important to ensure that Australia's carer workforce remains adequately trained to deal with the challenges of social isolation, and that churn of staff in the sector is minimised in order to facilitate the development of more long-term, positive social bonds between the carer and the care recipient.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that when funding social programs for the community, governments should remain cognisant of the reality that an investment in preventing social isolation is an investment in preventing worse and more costly health outcomes further down the line. Effort will also need to be made to ensure that social events are delivered in a way that is accessible by public transport, in line with the other recommendations contained within this report.

Recommendations

NSW Local Councils

- Promote more ageing-inclusive social events which are both accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse demographics and affordable for disadvantaged residents.

Federal Department of Education and Training

- Fund universities to trial innovative pilots that involve older residents in both learning and the teaching of areas that sit outside the standard curriculum.

⁸⁵ Ray Oldenburg, *Celebrating the Third Place*

⁸⁶ BaptistCare, *Centres*

⁸⁷ Riverwood Community Centre, *About us*

Tackling the dementia challenge

While the challenges associated with dementia differ in many respects from those that are associated with other aspects of ageing, the need to plan for a growing number of Sydney residents who will be living with the condition creates a logical imperative to utilise this opportunity to also gauge the city's preparedness and inclusivity for people living with dementia. Figures compiled by Deloitte Access Economics for Dementia Australia calculate that the number of NSW residents living with the condition will increase from around 120,000 today to roughly 300,000 in 2050.⁸⁸ No area will be exempt from having to service a substantial increase in the number of residents with dementia. As such, local councils should begin working on strategies to help manage this demographic shift, while ensuring that their approach is appropriately tailored to their localised urban environment.

Academics have already outlined a number of planning principles which are already helping to make our public spaces dementia friendly. The University of Warwick's Wellbeing in Sustainable Environments research unit has published *Streets for Life: inclusive Urban Design*.⁸⁹ Alzheimer's Australia has released *Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities: A toolkit for Local Government*.⁹⁰ Hornsby Shire Council in 2018 announced a Dementia

Friendly Policy. The area surrounding Hornsby has a dementia rate of 2.4%, higher than the NSW average of 1.59%, prompting the council to develop a plan to become Sydney's first dementia-friendly community.⁹¹

The University of Wollongong is meanwhile working with Kiama Council to showcase a dementia-friendly community, drawing on the collaborative research it has undertaken with Alzheimer's Australia.⁹² The Dementia-Friendly Kiama Project:

- Tracks the progress of businesses and organisations looking to make changes to design and staff training to work towards becoming more dementia-friendly.
- Increases community awareness of dementia through education.
- Suggests improvements to town-scape and amenities to improve access for people living with dementia.

The initiative has been so successful that work is now underway to create more Dementia-Friendly Communities in other parts of Australia, with the Kiama project recognised with an Excellence in Community Partnerships Award at the 2016 National Disability Awards.⁹³

Forecast number of people living with dementia in Australia

	2011	2012	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050
NSW	91,038	95,028	107,037	128,238	182,331	248,139	303,673
VIC	68,397	71,544	81,117	98,123	141,161	195,459	245,813
QLD	48,674	51,005	58,509	73,470	114,800	166,032	215,272
SA	23,710	24,627	27,353	32,062	44,236	59,053	69,620
WA	23,931	25,177	29,041	36,500	46,332	57,781	68,708
TAS	6,732	7,003	7,818	9,362	13,544	18,043	20,653
NT*	838	878	1,049	1,473	2,700	3,992	4,916
ACT	3,254	3,445	4,040	5,167	8,181	11,632	13,970
AUST	266,574	278,707	315,963	384,396	553,285	760,131	942,624

Source: Deloitte Access Economics prepared for Dementia Australia

88 Deloitte Access Economics, Dementia across Australia, 2011-2050

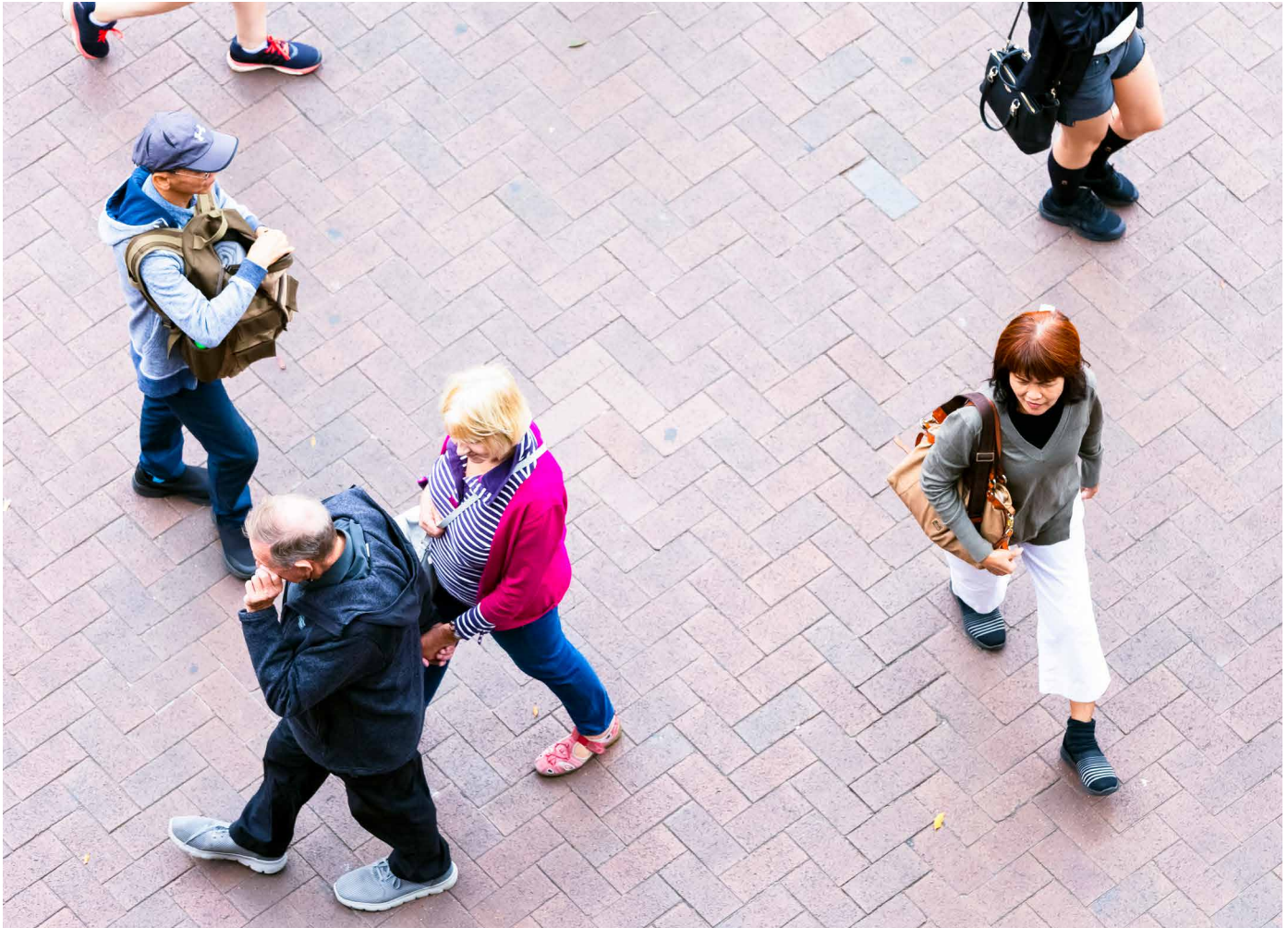
89 Streets for Life: inclusive Urban Design

90 Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities: A toolkit for Local Government

91 Hornsby Council, Dementia Friendly Policy

92 Dementia Australia, Dementia Friendly Communities, Kiama

93 Dementia Australia, Dementia-friendly Kiama wins National Disability Award



Other local councils across NSW should examine both the Kiama and Hornsby initiatives and develop their own tailored strategies to deal with the growing number of residents within their own community which are living with dementia. Such strategies should be developed in partnership and through collaboration with individuals who are living with dementia themselves. Much of the success of Kiama's strategy is directly attributable to the fact that it was developed in collaboration with both the Dementia Friendly Alliance and a Dementia Advisory Group, both of which involved a large number of residents who were living with dementia.

Beyond street design, local planning and social services, there is also a need to ensure that adequate housing and care is available for people living with dementia. It is overwhelmingly beneficial for people living with dementia to be able to remain within the family home with a family carer available, with quality of life significantly higher and coping with memory loss significantly easier for those who are able to do so.⁹⁴ The Australian Government will need to ensure that a sufficient number of Home Care Packages are available to support the needs of a growing number of Australians living with dementia. The number of people living with dementia who are in public housing is also forecast to grow from 12,916 in 2020 to 31,672 by 2050 across Australia.⁹⁵ To meet this

forecast growth in demand, state governments must ensure that their housing stock is appropriate in scale and design to meet the needs of this rapidly growing demographic.

The Australian Government should also use the upcoming Aged Care Royal Commission to review whether the Home Support Programmes and Home Care Packages available today are being appropriately tailored to provide the right level of support, and that employees in this sector are appropriately trained to provide for the needs of people with dementia. At present, home care recipients with moderate to severe levels of cognitive impairment associated with dementia may be eligible for a Dementia and Cognition Supplement.⁹⁶ The supplement rate is currently set at 10% of the package funds the care recipient already receives under their Home Care package, though an evaluation should be undertaken to determine whether the supplement is set an appropriate level.

Not all people living with dementia will reside in traditional housing. For retirement village operators, Alzheimer's Australia, the Property Council of Australia, Retirement Living and the IRT Foundation in 2016 have produced a discussion paper on *Dementia in Retirement Villages*.⁹⁷ While each of the recommendations in that report are worthy of consideration, there are several that should be introduced as a matter of priority.

94 AHURI: *Future housing and support needs of people with dementia*
95 Ibid.

96 Department of Health, *The Dementia and Cognition supplement in home care*

97 *Dementia in Retirement Villages*

For the Australian Government, these include:

- Allocating funds from the Department of Social Services' Dementia and Aged Services Grant to promote dementia awareness, risk reduction messages and healthy ageing in retirement villages.
- Fund dementia education programs specifically for retirement village operators and staff.
- Instructing the Department of Social Services to prioritise allocations of home care packages which provide service-integrated housing in retirement villages for people with dementia.

For the NSW Government, this would include:

- Incorporating reduced developer contributions in State/Territory planning policies for retirement villages that support people with dementia and/or developments that co-locate retirement villages and residential aged care facilities that incorporate dementia-friendly design and environments.

Combating social isolation remains important, if not more-so, for people living with dementia. People with dementia are almost twice as likely to have high rates of loneliness compared to the general public.⁹⁸

International research has identified a full 35% of people with dementia had self-reported experiences of loneliness in the recent past.⁹⁹ To tackle this, the UK Government has introduced a *Side by Side* volunteer initiative to encourage people to buddy up with people with dementia, helping to improve health outcomes in the process.¹⁰⁰ Similar initiatives should be trialled in Australia. In that vein, the Art Gallery of NSW deserves special commendation for its Art and Dementia Program, which has been hugely beneficial for people living with dementia across Sydney.¹⁰¹ Both councils and the private sector should consider expanding their offerings of programs to deliver more opportunities for people with dementia to engage with the wider community.

Tackling social isolation will also require accessibility to appropriate transport services. Thankfully, the NSW Department of Family & Community Services in conjunction with Alzheimer's Australia has already developed a report on *Meeting the Transport Needs of People with Dementia*.¹⁰² This document will remain useful in the near term but will need to be updated soon to take into account new forms of mobility.

Finally, this paper commends the NSW Government's work to date on the Dementia Care Competency Framework, developed by NSW Health, The University of Wollongong and Dementia Collaborative Research Centres.¹⁰³ This initiative has already delivered high-quality dementia care training to over 5000 clinicians. This program will need to be continued to ensure that the state is able to provide an adequately trained network of professionals sufficient in scale to meet the forecast surge in dementia incidence.

98 <https://www.dementia.org.au/files/NATIONAL/documents/Dementia-and-Loneliness.pdf>

99 Turning Up the Volume: Unheard voices of people with dementia.

100 Alzheimer's Society, *Side by Side*

101 Art Gallery NSW, Looking at paintings brings pleasure for people living with dementia

102 Meeting the Transport Needs of People with Dementia

103 Health Dementia Care, Competency & Training Network

RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal Department of Social Services

- Prioritise allocations of home care packages which provide service-integrated housing in retirement villages for people with dementia.
- Introduce an Australian version of the UK Government's Side by Side volunteer initiative, which encourages younger people to buddy up with people with dementia.

Federal Department of Education and Training

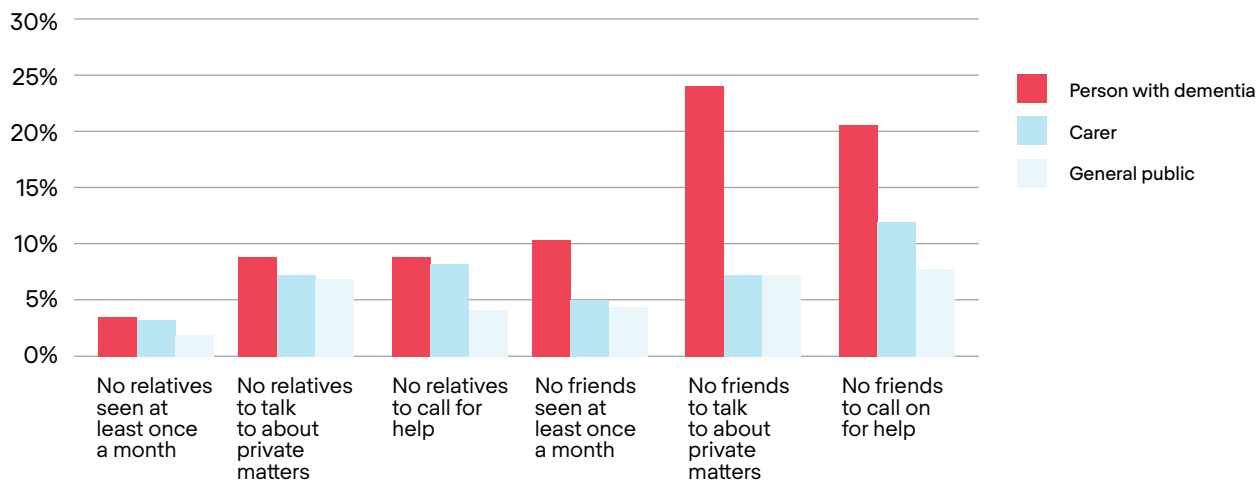
- Develop a larger tertiary curriculum to ensure that Australia's carer workforce is being adequately trained to deal with the challenges of social isolation and dementia.

- Provide support for the development of dementia education programs specifically targeted at retirement village operators and staff.

NSW Local Councils

- Develop local strategies to manage the forecast growth in local residents living with dementia, drawing from Alzheimer Australia's *Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities: A toolkit for Local Government*.
- Ensure that social events are delivered in a way that makes them accessible and welcoming for people living with dementia.

Self-reporting of loneliness for people with dementia and their carers is significantly higher than the general population



Source: Alzheimer's Australia, *Dementia and Loneliness*

Conclusion

The Committee for Sydney acknowledges that the ageing population is not a phenomenon that is unique to Sydney, nor are the policy challenges associated with that change. This report seeks to provide a series of immediate, practical recommendations that federal, state and local governments can take to begin to prepare for the ageing of the population.

It is the Committee for Sydney's strong belief that in preparing for this shift, policymakers will need to place dignity and choice at the centre of their ambition to create a city that is both inclusive and liveable for its senior residents. Many of the workers who are today contributing to the renewal of Sydney and its establishment as a globally leading city are the same individuals who will one day seek to retire here, and on the principle of fairness, policymakers owe it to those individuals to design a city that is considerate of their needs and not just the needs of the next generation of workers.

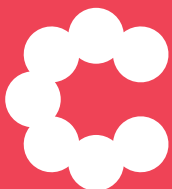
Many of the reforms recommended in this report will be beneficial to all Sydneysiders. Better public spaces, more flexible public transport and a stronger social offering are all outcomes that would benefit Sydneysiders both young and old alike. However, a failure to design a city around these placemaking principles is likely to be felt more acutely by older residents as they continue to age. While policymakers at all levels have demonstrated a genuine desire to facilitate the ability of retirees to age in place, there is a need to ensure that policies consider not just at where older generations might choose to live, but also at the ways in which they are connected to their local communities. A well connected, socially active and happy ageing population adds vibrancy to a city. Ensuring that such an outcome is available to individuals of all cultural and financial backgrounds should also be a key goal of policy makers as they build the infrastructure and public spaces which will define the city over coming decades.

The Committee for Sydney hopes that this report provides practical recommendations to assist with achieving that vision, and that these recommendations are embraced in their totality through a collaborative framework engaging all layers of government.

Contributors

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PwC
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South Western Sydney Local Health District
Stockland
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The Australian Centre for Social Innovation
The Star Entertainment Group
Transdev Australasia
Transport for NSW
University of Technology Sydney
University of Wollongong
UNSW
Western Sydney University






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