MONASH CITY COUNCIL

‘Positive Ageing Action Plan’
2010-2014
Foreword by the Mayor

I am pleased to present the Monash ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010-2014’.

Positive ageing has fast become a mainstream international and national concept for addressing the needs of an ageing population at all levels of government. It aims to enable a better quality of life for ageing residents by facilitating opportunities to stay active and engaged in the community through recreation, volunteering, and social network development.

Positive ageing is not necessarily about living longer, but recognising that quality of life is just, if not more, important.

This plan recognises Council’s ongoing commitment to its ageing community by providing high quality services, programs and events that meet the needs and aspirations of our residents.

I look forward to the successful implementation of the Action Plan and to reporting to Council and the Monash community on outcomes achieved.

Cr Charlotte Baines
Mayor
## Contents

Foreword by the Mayor 2  
Contents 3  
Introduction 4  
Summary in Languages other than English 5  
Background 6  
Requirements for Success and Budget Implications 6  
Demographics 7  
Achievements 8  
Links to other Council Plans and Strategies 9  
Highlights of Consultation Findings 11  
Themes 17  
Acronyms 19  
Action Plan
Introduction

The City of Monash ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010 – 2014’ is a strategic document that will assist to inform Council in its direction and decisions to ensure it is responsive to its ageing community.

The plan demonstrates Council’s commitment to improving its responsiveness and quality of its services, programs, facilities and systems in addressing the needs and aspirations of older residents within our municipality.

In the plan, Council outlines its priorities for the next four years and identifies specific actions to be implemented through a whole of Council approach. It ensures that Council’s services and programs are meeting our communities’ needs and expectations now and into the future.

Council undertook an extensive consultation process involving residents and key stakeholders to develop this plan. Residents and key stakeholders identified what was important for themselves and their families as they age in Monash and how Council and other stakeholders can support these priorities.

By working collaboratively across Council and with external organisations, the plan aims to address a number of actions over the next four years, build upon current achievements and strengthen Council’s ability to address issues affecting our older residents.
The City of Monash ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010 – 2014’ is a strategic document that will inform Council in its directions and decisions to ensure it is responsive to its ageing community.

The age structure for the City (2006 Census) shows that Monash has an ageing population, with 28 per cent of the total population being over 55 years of age. Currently there are 12,392 people living in the City of Monash whom are aged over 75 years (2006 Census).

In 2026 the 75+ demographic is estimated to have approximately 16,421 people or 8.7% of the total population.

Council has undertaken an extensive consultation process, including attendance at the Oakleigh, Clayton and Glen Waverley Festivals, focus groups, surveys and one on one meetings. Council has used the information that was gained from these consultations to inform the ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010 – 2014’.

This strategy ensures that Council’s services and programs are meeting our communities’ needs and expectations now and into the future.

For more information about this strategy and action plan or to see the document in another format or language other than English, please contact the Community Planning and Development Unit on 9518 3555.
Background

This document supersedes the ‘Strategy for an Ageing Community 2002-2011’ which has been the strategic document informing Council for the past 8 years in relation to ageing in Monash.

Council committed to consulting and exploring in detail its community’s expectations now and into the future to ensure a positive ageing experience in Monash.

The outcome of this extensive consultation has ensured that the following document is one that has taken into account the views, opinions and expectations of the Monash community and has provided Council with the opportunity to commit to achievable and realistic outcomes to address these issues.

Requirements for Success and Budget Implications

The implementation of the actions in the ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010-2014’ may have budget and resource implications for Council. Council will ensure that at each budget cycle, consideration to the allocation of resources to support the implementation of the actions will be given.

In addition Council will achieve successful implementation of the Action Plan by working in conjunction with Council staff, key community organisations and agencies and through:

- Coordination of a whole of Council approach;
- Strengthening existing relationships with key external community agencies
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting to Council and the community;
- Inclusive consultation and engagement processes and structures
Demographics

The City of Monash is located approximately 20 kilometers south-east of Melbourne. In 2009, 172,740 people live in 59,150 households in Monash, making it one of Melbourne’s most populous municipalities. Over 16,400 workplaces in the City of Monash provide approximately 90,000 jobs, making our city second only to the Melbourne CBD for job opportunities.

High proportions (39.7%) of residents living in Monash were born overseas, making Monash a culturally and linguistically diverse and vibrant place.

The age structure for the City (2006 Census) shows that Monash has an ageing population, with 28 per cent of the total population being over 55 years of age. It is forecasted that by 2026 there will be approximately 53,000 people over the age of 55 living in the City of Monash, at this point in time the over 55’s will comprise close to one in three residents, which will pose challenges to service provision and health infrastructure in the future for all levels of government.

Currently there are 12,392 people living in the City of Monash whom are aged over 75 years (2006 Census).

In 2026 it is estimated that the 75+ demographic will represent approximately 16,421 people or 8.7% of the total population.

![Breakdown of Monash Residents Aged 75+ years](chart.png)
Council has achieved a number of notable achievements from the Strategy for an Ageing Community 2002 - 2011 such as:

- Council continues to support the activities of the City of Monash Older Persons Reference Group including the Positive Ageing Seniors Expo in Seniors Week, which attracts more than 400 older adults.
- Council participates annually in Victorian Seniors Week by hosting a number of events and activities which more than 1500 people participate.
- Council has developed a partnership with New Hope and Oakleigh Recreation Centre Coordinator (ORC) to begin the implementation of the ‘Seniors Exercise Outreach’ pilot program aimed at outreaching to the Senior Citizen Clubs in the Oakleigh area.
- Council continued the provision of high quality aged care across its facilities at Monash Gardens and Elizabeth Gardens.
- Planning for the provision of a home delivered meals services that offers culturally diverse meals.
- Council continued to facilitate Community Safety Month annually with a range of partners, including representatives from Victoria Police, MFB, VicRoads, Neighbourhood Watch, Neighbourhood Renewal, Greater Monash GP Network and Monash Link Community Health Services.
- Council continues to support the Community Grants Program and provide assistance to clubs, groups and organisations, many of whom focus on older adults. Council increased the budget for the 2011 grant round by $100,000.
- Council has supported the development of a ‘Men’s Shed in Monash’
- Council continues to support the municipalities 40+ Seniors Clubs.
- Monash Public Libraries continue to provide a high quality service to residents including the ‘Library in the Home’ program and delivery to Residential Aged Care Facilities.
- Information sessions regarding HACC services have been delivered to interested CALD groups, clubs and organisations within the community.
- A community safety brochure was developed and distributed to all households in the municipality on a range of community safety topics.
- A road safety review was completed to determine gaps in education programs in Council. Council continues to support the Wiser Driver program in partnership with Road Safe Inner Eastern with 2 courses offered per year.
- Programs and attendance levels at the Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre were maintained.
- The municipality now has more than 30km of off-road bike paths and 28km of on-road bike routes.
- Council continues to support Neighbourhood Houses who provide low cost programs.
- Council continues to support the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre Senior Citizens Register.
- Council, in partnership with the Department of Transport, participated in a travel assist pilot project which increased awareness amongst older adults of mobility options available besides driving.
Links to other Council Plans and Strategies

The ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010-2014’ supports and includes specific actions from a number of Council plans and strategies, these include:

- Monash Public Health & Well Being Plan 2010 - 2013
- The Multicultural Framework and Action Plan 2009-2013
- Monash Public Library Service Strategic Plan: 2009 – 2012
- Monash Baby Boomers Strategic Action plan 2010- 2014

CONSULTATION

Council undertook an extensive consultation process to ensure that residents 75+ and their families were given the opportunity via different approaches to provide feedback and inform the content of this action plan.

Consultation with the community, internal and external stakeholders was undertaken through surveys, focus groups, workshops and attendance at festivals. The data that was gathered during the consultation assisted Council in identifying the top priorities for those 75+ years for the period of the next four years and in developing corresponding actions for the plan.

In developing the ‘Positive Ageing Action Plan 2010 - 2014’ Council considered the themes that had already been identified in the Monash Baby Boomers Study and utilised these themes as a basis for consultation. As this plan looks beyond the Boomer years, Council wanted to ensure that it was capturing the ideas, opinions and concerns of the 75+ cohort and tested the themes at the initial focus groups. It was confirmed that the study’s themes were transferable to the older age group, however some of the themes needed to be expanded and additional themes were included to ensure Council was being responsive to its community.

The identified themes were:

- Family, Social and Civic Participation
- Health and Wellbeing
- Volunteering
- Community Safety
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Communication and Information

Council distributed more than 3000 surveys to residents, senior citizen clubs, multicultural groups and service providers of which 548 surveys were returned. The survey was also placed on Council’s website for people to download or complete online and were available at Council’s Libraries, Recreation Centres and Neighbourhood Houses

Council attended the Clayton Festival, Glen Waverley Chinese New Year Festival and Oakleigh Festival to conduct its consultation via a “Have Your Say” tent, in which over 450 residents participated. Participants were presented with approximately 35 different issues across the six themes, participants were asked to identify their top six issues that affected themselves and/or their families as they aged in Monash. This provided Council with invaluable insight into what were the major issues affecting its older residents and where the primary focus needs to be in the future.
The top issues that were identified at the Festivals were:

- Residential Aged Care Facilities
- Senior Social Groups & Clubs
- Home & Community Care
- Accessible Public Transport
- Adequate public toilets
- Accessible Transport
- PALS program
- Public Lighting
- Opportunity to give back to the community
- Celebrate & Recognise Volunteers
- Home Safety
- Neighbourhood Houses, Learning Centres, Libraries & MGA
- Community consultation opportunities
- Information in larger fonts
- Health & Support Services

Community organisations, Health Service providers, Neighbourhood Houses and a range of other service providers all participated in the consultation process.

Focus group, workshop and survey participants were asked what they enjoyed about living in the City of Monash and to identify where improvements could be made. A summary of the responses is provided in the following section.

**Highlights of consultation findings**

**What does Positive Ageing mean?**

Positive Ageing has many different meanings for Monash's older residents. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that positive ageing means living a happy, fulfilling life with friends and family, free from stress and worry. There was also a strong emphasis emphasis on the importance of staying active both physically and mentally.

- ‘Living life to the full and overcoming problems associated with an ageing body’
- ‘Being independent as long as possible’
- ‘Take a day at a time and make the best of it’
- ‘Trying to keep your body as young as your mind’
Leading and active life and keeping in touch with the community, participating where possible and remaining positive’

‘To enjoy life as much as possible, be positive in all activities and do not let age get you down’

What do you enjoy about living in the City of Monash?

The survey revealed that the City of Monash provides its older residents with a wealth of services and activities that add to the quality of their lives. Access to facilities, shopping centres, transport and services was rated highly amongst respondents as being one of the things they enjoyed most about the municipality. Other important features included a clean environment, parks, reserves and open space with many people commenting that they enjoyed being able to walk to these spaces from their home.

Throughout the consultation phase it became evident to Council that its older residents value and rely upon their neighbours; this was especially true for those residents whom had lived within the municipality for many years.

‘Fresh air, space, leisure opportunities, neighbours, facilities, trees’

‘It is a fairly vibrant city, excellent shopping facilities, a good train/bus transport system, parks and gardens and a feeling of safety’

‘The area is well kept, the streets are neat and clean’

‘Plenty of interest groups and recreational groups available. Plenty of parks and gardens, nearness to hospitals and medical centres’

‘I have lived here for 55 years, I have a good street and we all know one another and help is there if I need it’

‘It is my home since 1963, my 2 children were born here, went to school here, took part in sport activities, we belong here’

‘Surroundings, friendly people, transport, able to get to shops, support of organisations’

What is a concern to you and your family as you/they age in Monash?

Throughout the consultation a number of issues were raised by older residents and their families in regards to their concerns as they age in Monash. Council is in a position to work towards addressing some of these issues, however a number are the responsibility of other levels of Government. Council does have an advocacy role in highlighting and raising awareness of these concerns to the State and Federal Government and peak organisations.
The major issues affecting residents aged 75+ as they age are:

- Property and Home Maintenance
- Loss of ability to drive
- Health concerns for self and partner
- Mobility
- Losing independence
- Being able to age in place
- Access to quality aged care facilities
- Living with disabilities
- Dependence on and/or access to Public Transport
- Finances
- Safety

What contributes positively to your life as you age in Monash?

The City of Monash has many attributes that contribute positively to the lives of older residents as they age and it was interesting to note that many of the items indicated below were supported both in the survey, focus groups and at the Festivals.

The top responses, in order of ranking, were

- Access to services
- Access to health and support services
- Access to good public transport
- Accessible footpaths paths
- Interaction with family and friends
- Quality libraries
- Home care
- Seniors groups
- Public lighting
- Open spaces and parks
- Home gardening/maintenance
- Public seating
- Community transport
- Public toilets
- Accessible walking tracks

Communication and Information

Council recognises that the different age cohorts often prefer different methods of communicating whether it is via email, mail, local newspapers, PALS or the Bulletin. This consultation process has informed Council that many of those over 75 years have a preference for receiving information from Council via mail or in the local newspaper.
**Participation and Engagement**

Social participation is a key to staying active and engaged within the community. It was evident throughout this survey that many of the respondents were involved in different aspects of community life whether it is educational, social or recreational activity. Examples of such participation include being a member of the U3A (University of the Third Age), social groups (Probus, Life Activities), senior citizen clubs, recreational groups (golf, walking and cycling clubs), service clubs (Lions, Rotary) and participating in Neighbourhood Houses activities, PALS program and local churches. Physical exercise was a very popular activity for majority of respondents, participating in some form of exercise 2-3 times per week.

The most popular physical activities that our older residents participate in are:

- Walking
- Strength training
- Gardening
- Golf
- Bowls
- Swimming
- Tai Chi

Council is mindful that there are many isolated elderly residents within the municipality and endeavours to offer programs and services to assist these residents. Council is also aware that some residents face a number of barriers that prevent or deter them from participating in activities.

The major barriers, as indicated in the survey that prevent people from participating in social, physical and recreational activities are:

- Time constraints
- Finances
- Health
- Mobility
- Transport
- Disability

Participation in social groups, networks and clubs is crucial to creating a sense of community and reducing social isolation amongst older residents.

The length of time that a resident has lived in the area was highlighted as a major strength in creating a sense of belonging in the community. Longevity of residence seemed to increase a person’s connections with their neighbours, friends, social clubs etc.
‘Nice people, nice neighbours’

‘Meeting people and helping at the groups that I attend’

‘Have lived here for 42 years and have developed a network of friends and interests’

‘A smile exchanged with a passerby’

‘Friendliness of people’

‘I always feel as though I am amongst friends wherever I am in Mt Waverley or Glen Waverley’

‘Being known by the shop keepers, meeting friends out, being a member of Probus, U3A and Church and knowing so many people from my involvement in organisations over the past 40 years’

‘I belong because I live here’

**Carers**

There is a high number of the survey participants who were caring for or looking after another person in need of support or assistance whether that person is their partner, friend, neighbour, elderly parent or their grandchildren. Respondents to this survey indicated that they were caring for these people on a regular basis (majority were between daily and 2-3 times per week).

**Volunteering**

The role of volunteering was reinforced through the consultation process in terms of people wanting to volunteer their time and also needing assistance from volunteers. There are a large proportion of the ageing community who volunteer their time to people and organisations. Most people indicated that they enjoyed this time immensely and will continue to volunteer for the satisfaction that it provides.

The majority of people volunteered between 1-9 hours of their time per week in a range of activities and jobs.

*The more popular volunteer opportunities that residents are participating in are:*

- Local Churches
- Senior Social Groups/ Committees
- Meals on Wheels
- Opportunity Shops
- Various Charities
- Neighbourhood Watch
As with all activities there are still barriers that prevent or deter older residents from participating in volunteering.

**Barriers to volunteering;**

- Age
- Health/Physical Issues
- Time constraints

**Diversity**

Throughout the survey it was clear that many people embraced Monash's multicultural municipality and felt that this was in fact one of the many positives of living within the City of Monash. It is evident to Council however that there are opportunities to further strengthen and embrace diversity by the wider Monash community. To assist meeting this aim Council will employ a full time Multicultural Community Development officer who will work closely with seniors clubs and groups as part of their role.

In recognising the growing diversity of Monash’s population, the ongoing challenge for Council is to ensure that all of its programs and services meet the needs of the many diverse backgrounds within the municipality.

**Conclusion**

Council has endeavoured to consult with its community to ensure that the opinions, ideas and aspirations of its over 75+ residents are captured within this action plan. Council, by implementing these actions, will be responding to the needs of this cohort and improving the quality of life that older residents have through the provision of services and programs that are responsive to their needs.
Themes

Family, Social and Civic Participation
The consultation emphasised the importance that libraries, neighbourhood houses, social clubs and churches play in ensuring that people remain connected to their community.

The important role that families, neighbours and friends play in contributing to the quality of life and sense of belonging for residents over 75 years was evident and requires opportunities to help foster and strengthen these relationships such as social groups and activities of interest.

Health and Wellbeing
The ability to access health care services and quality recreational facilities is very important for an ageing community. Access to these services provides residents with peace of mind that, if and when they required medical attention it was available to them within a reasonable proximity.

The feedback from the survey is that the community took great pride in Monash’s parks and open spaces, commenting throughout the consultation process that this is one of the aspects that they enjoy most about living in the City of Monash. Monash parks and open spaces have a high patronage and the City of Monash hosts various walks, functions and activities within these facilities to encourage the community to enjoy its surrounds.

Volunteering
Valuing and recognising the contribution that volunteers make to the Monash community was emphasised throughout the consultation. It was highlighted that although people do not volunteer for the recognition, celebrating the role of the volunteer is important. Organisations, clubs and groups expressed that they could not operate without volunteers and rely heavily upon the limited number of volunteers that they have.

Building the capacity of organisations such as the Monash Volunteer Resource Centre to increase their profile in the community and their ability to assist with community issues, for example community transport, is an essential component to this plan.

Community Safety
The communities’ perception of safety and what contributes to this was discussed at length during the consultation. Public lighting, well designed community spaces and information awareness were the most highlighted issues amongst residents. Providing residents with the knowledge and tools to improve their perception of safety both in their own home and the community is a key factor in addressing this need for community members over 75 years.

Housing and Infrastructure
The ability to remain in the ‘family home’ and how this can be achieved is a major issue of concern for residents over 75 years of age. Council’s role in addressing this.
will be through providing residents with information and awareness of services to enable residents to modify their home and attain the assistance that they require.

Access to high quality residential aged care facilities if and when the time comes is a concern to many residents over the age of 75 years and their families.

Access to transport, adequate and appropriate bike and walking tracks, waste collection and clean and accessible public toilets were also raised and highlighted as issues of concern to Monash residents over 75 years.

**Communication and Information**

Communicating with the community and how Council provides information was highlighted as an issue of concern for many residents. Council recognises that all age cohorts will respond differently to the various communication methods and tools that Council utilises to inform the community of Council business, information, services, programs and events.

The consultation revealed that residents over the age of 75 years prefer to receive information from Council via the mail or local newspapers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<td>PAG</td>
<td>Planned Activity Group</td>
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<td>PALS</td>
<td>Positive Ageing Lifestyles Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>HACC</td>
<td>Home and Community Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGA</td>
<td>Monash Gallery of Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>MVRC</td>
<td>Monash Volunteer Resource Centre</td>
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