

# Age-Friendly Ambassadors project



## Project overview

The Age-Friendly Ambassadors project sought to engage older people from the community to become community champions or ambassadors.

Age-Friendly Ambassador role involved networking and encouraging community members to participate in local activities that cater to older people's needs and interests.

Ambassadors also contributed to the development of Macedon Ranges Shire's Over 55s Connect Facebook project.

## Project description

Age-friendly Ambassadors were trained to act in community leadership roles, and as role models in terms of community participation.

The Age-friendly Ambassadors roles included improving communication and engagement of people over the age of 55 years in the community to increase participation rates in programs, activities and events. They acted as a conduit between Council and older people or the community helping to share information and resources specifically for older people.

They provided input and assistance in the development of the Over 55s Connect Facebook page and also shared and liked the page through their networks to encourage greater interaction with the page.

## Project model

- Expressions of interest were sought via a variety of methods, including newsletters and through advertisements in local newspapers.
- An Age-friendly Ambassador position description was developed.
- A plan was developed for information sessions to vet and determine suitability and interest from volunteers.
- Training was developed to cover –
  - code of conduct
  - professional boundaries
  - position description and role expectations
  - building communication skills verbally and online methods
  - social media training – how does Facebook work
- Five Age-Friendly Ambassadors were recruited from across the Macedon Ranges (Gisborne, Kyneton and Woodend).
- Age-Friendly Ambassador meetings were held.
- Age-friendly Ambassadors' work was promoted:

- online through the development of Ambassador profiles on the Facebook page
- in the *Age-Friendly eNews* bulletin
- in a radio segment on Highlands FM.

## Budget

<b>Total cost</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
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## Project challenges

- The Age-Friendly Ambassador role was very specific, and in order for it to be sustainable, it needed to be adapted in the context of the council's other commitments and priorities, for example federal aged care reform.
- Applications from interested community members needed to be vetted to ensure applicants can be fully engaged in the project and have strong community connections.
- Regular contact and information sharing needs to be maintained throughout the project to keep Ambassadors engaged.
- Ensuring they understood what their role was and wasn't as well as the professional boundaries to be adhered to was challenging to communicate. Clear position descriptions and specific training helped to alleviate this.

## Project outcomes

There was strong community interest in the Age-Friendly Ambassador role, and nine expressions of interest were received.

Ambassadors were supported to attend 24 events to welcome new faces and promote social connection.

Ambassadors attended 70 events in total.

Feedback from Ambassadors shows they:

- felt they had an important role in sharing information about opportunities for social connection among their community networks
- valued the opportunity to feed into the council's Healthy Ageing Engagement Team and Community Support Unit planning
- gained a better understanding of the council's role and responsibilities
- found the face-to-face information sessions to be valuable.

Most Ambassadors wanted to continue to be involved with the council as Community Support Unit volunteers.

## Project sustainability

Four out of the five Age-friendly Ambassadors remained actively engaged in their roles throughout the life of the project.

Subject to staff capacity and interest, Age-Friendly Ambassadors will continue their role as champions for positive ageing.

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