LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL
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2017 Age-Friendly Community Survey
Report

Authored by Vanessa H. Brait and Daryll Archibald

ENQUIRIES
Dr Daryll Archibald   **T**: 03 9479 2684
Lecturer in Public Health   **E**:D.archibald@latrobe.edu.au
La Trobe University   **latrobe.edu.au**
Victoria 3086

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Disclaimer

INTRODUCTION

The Mitchell Shire Age-Friendly Communities project is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and managed in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Mitchell Shire Council commenced a partnership with La Trobe University to assist the Council with specific projects as well as to work together to meet the training needs of the future public health workforce. As part of this partnership, La Trobe University has assisted with the data analysis of the *2017 Age-Friendly Community Survey.* The purpose of this survey was to understand the challenges faced by a broad range of older people in Mitchell Shire, with the overall aim of developing a range of projects or programs to benefit older people, creating a more age-friendly community. Specifically, the survey investigated three critical details: 1) How older people currently engage with their communities, 2) What barriers exist that make it difficult for older people to participate in activities that are meaningful to them, and 3) What would older people prioritise as projects to enhance their communities and make them more age-friendly. This report summarises the findings of this survey.

METHODOLOGY

The first step in developing this project was to recruit and train the Positive Ageing Ambassadors. This occurred in the period from December 2016 to March 2017, and seven volunteers from across Mitchell Shire were recruited. The Ambassadors were skilled-up to talk with their neighbours and the wider community about the challenges they faced and the ways in which Mitchell Shire could be made more age-friendly. The Ambassadors created a short survey with 4 questions to capture this information from the community. The survey was open from April 24th until October 6th, 2017. Administration of the survey was achieved either by completing a hardcopy of the survey or by online submission. Mitchell Shire Council's online community engagement hub, also known as 'Engaging Mitchell', was used for online submissions. Each Ambassador was allocated a geographical area to ensure all areas within the Municipality was consulted with and had the opportunity to participate. A variety of methods were used to get the survey out within the community. Hardcopy surveys were left at all Customer & Library Service Centres, local doctors, hospitals, post offices and shops / cafes. The Ambassadors also attended several different meetings, workshops, events and markets to reach community groups and residents from all over the Shire. Local retirement villages and Aged-Care facilities were visited and the Ambassadors participated in group or one on one interviews with the residents to explain the survey and collect their responses. They also participated in home visits to elderly people identified as isolated and/or house bound. This approach provided effective consultation with seniors who are both active in the community and those who, due to their life situation, are harder to reach.

RESULTS

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

A total of 525 individuals from 19 towns responded to this survey. The places of residence of the respondents are summarised in Figure 1. The most common places of residence were Seymour (245 respondents; 46.7%), Broadford (75 respondents; 14.3%), Kilmore (62 respondents; 11.8%) and Wallan (36 respondents; 6.9%). Trawool, Nagambie, Northwood, Yea, Puckapunyal, Beveridge, Hidden Valley, Avenel, Hilldene, Willowmavin, Reedy Creek, Tarcome, Lancefield, Mangalore, Sugarloaf Creek, Whittlesea, Warrandyte, Pascoe Vale and Coburg were reported as places of residence by four or fewer respondents (represented by "other" in Figure 1).

Legend:
- Seymour (245; 46.7%)
- Broadford (75; 14.3%)
- Kilmore (62; 11.8%)
- Wallan (36; 6.9%)
- Tallarook (19; 3.6%)
- Wandong (15; 2.9%)
- Heathcote Junction (8; 1.5%)
- Whitehead's creek (6; 1.1%)
- Pyalong (6; 1.1%)
- Clonbinane (5; 1.0%)
- Not provided (13; 2.5%)
- Other (35; 6.7%)

Total responses = 525
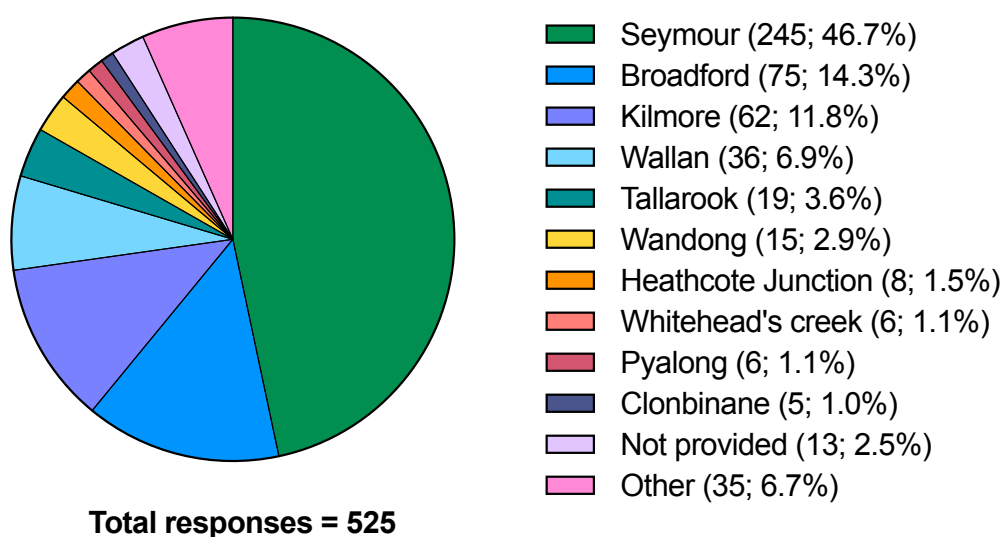
Figure 1. Place of residence of survey respondents

THE FEATURES THAT MAKE MITCHELL SHIRE A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question what they liked most about living in Mitchell Shire. Four hundred and eighty-one individuals responded to this question, and their responses are summarised in Table 1. The responses comprised 11 key themes. The friendliness of local people (212 mentions) and availability of facilities and services (133 mentions) were the most commonly identified features. Sense of community (77 mentions), country lifestyle (75 mentions), the nature / countryside (74 mentions), the location

(72 mentions) and the available social / community groups (70 mentions) were the next commonly identified features that make Mitchell Shire a good place to live.

Table 1. Features identified as making Mitchell Shire a good place to live (n=481)

Key Theme	Examples of responses	Number of responses
Friendly People	Friendly people, the people, friendly neighbours	212
Available Facilities and Services	Shops, medical clinics, hospitals, pool, library, sporting facilities	133
Sense of Community	Community spirit, support, feel welcome, lively, community volunteers	77
Country Lifestyle	Small town feel, relaxed, country atmosphere, quiet, peaceful, feeling of safety, slow pace of life	75
Nature / Countryside	River, scenery, parks, gardens, walking tracks, the town itself	74
Location	Proximity to Melbourne / Shepparton / Bendigo / Eildon, in the country, central Victorian position, climate / weather	72
Available Social / Community Groups	Clubs, activities, workshops, events	70
Transport	Public Transport	60
Size	Size, demographics	44
Feels Like Home	Born here, grew up here, family is here, feel comfortable here	18
Good Place to Live	Everything, meets my needs, enjoy living here	9
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	12

CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Respondents were asked about their current involvement in the community. Five hundred and sixteen individuals responded to this question and their responses are summarised in Figure 2. A strong engagement with the community was indicated by respondents, with 81.6% (421 respondents) indicating that they attend local community events, such as festivals, markets and/or sporting events, 70.2% (362 respondents) indicating that they are a member of a local community group/s, sporting group/s and/or network, and 54.8% (283 respondents) indicating that they have previously / currently volunteer within the shire. Only 12% (62 respondents) indicated that they do not currently engage with the community.
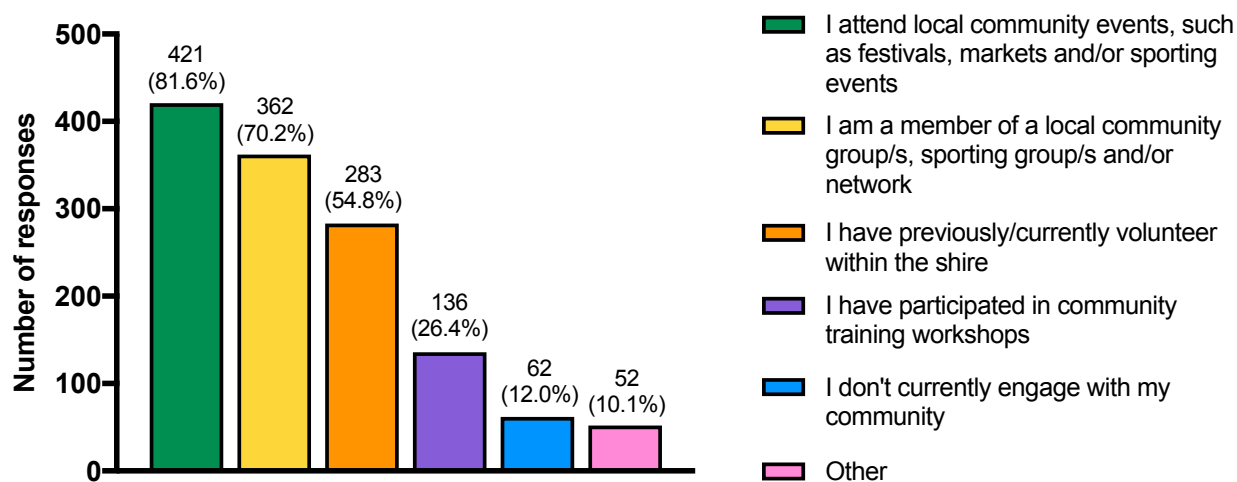
Figure 2. Current Involvement in the Community (n=516)

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question whether there were barriers to their participation in the community. Four hundred and thirty-three individuals responded to this question and their responses are summarised in Table 2. A large proportion of respondents (151 mentions) said there were no barriers to their participation in the community. Time conflicts (88 mentions), lack of transport or the distance needed to be travelled to attend community events (57 mentions) and having health problems (54 mentions) were the main barriers identified to participation in the community.

Table 2. Barriers to participation in the community (n=433)

Key Theme	Examples of responses	Number of responses
None	No, N/A, not really, none	151
Time conflicts	Lack of time, still working, family commitments, timing of activities, don't drive at night, lack of safety at night	88
Transport / Distance	Can't / don't drive, lack of public transport, bad transport connections, live out of town	57
Health Problems	Health / medical issues, arthritis, Alzheimer's, MS, partner has health problems	54
Age	old age, age, getting older	29
Mobility Issues	Limited mobility, unable to walk far	29
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Disability access, poor quality / lack of footpaths	24
Lack of Communication / Awareness	Don't know what's on, not enough notice	8
Not interested	Lack of interest in general or because of specific activities on offer, laziness	8
Affordability	On the pension, money	3
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	8
Other	Disparate issues/limitations	17

IMPROVEMENTS OR INITIATIVES TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY MORE AGE-FRIENDLY

<u>All Mitchell Shire</u>

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question what three improvements or initiatives could make their lives in the community more age-friendly. Four hundred and eighty-six individuals responded to this question and 1,069 separate suggestions were received covering a range of issues. Respondents gave one to seven suggestions each. The responses are summarised in Table 3.

To categorise the diverse thematic content of responses for this question we utilised a World Health Organization domain-based framework comprising 8 areas that influence the health and quality of life of older people (see Figure 3; World Health Organization, 2007*).
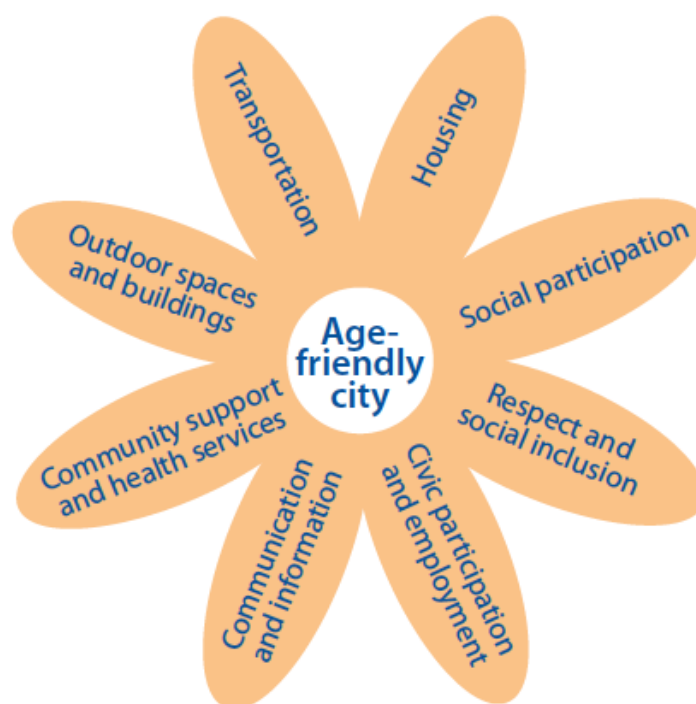

Figure 3. WHO Global Age-friendly City domains
(World Health Organization, 2007*)

The following presents the findings, firstly at the Mitchell Shire level generally and then at specific city levels within Mitchell Shire. Some responses related to a single domain, whereas others cut across domains. Thus, for each geographical area focused on below, two tables are presented. One which presents results relevant to a single domain and a further table including results that cut across domains.

At the general Mitchell Shire level, the majority of responses pertained to physical environment issues, followed by social environment issues, and then municipal services issues. The most commonly identified theme centred around outdoor spaces and buildings, with 430 suggestions (40.2%) relating to this issue. In particular, issues to do with the maintenance of

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footpaths and better wheelchair access were highlighted, along with wanting a cinema and pool, and public toilets and bench seats around the shopping strips. Transportation was the next most commonly identified theme, with 237 suggestions (22.2%) relating to this issue. In particular, better or more bus services, better road maintenance, more trains, and more disabled parking spaces were highlighted. The third most common theme was social participation, with 121 suggestions (11.3%) relating to this issue. These suggestions focused on the need for more varied social groups, such as gardening, bridge, walking, or crafts, more social events and activities, more workshops and festivals, and more fitness / exercise activities for seniors. Community Support and Health Services was also identified as a major theme (6.7%). Importantly, there were 38 suggestions that did not fit within a domain, and these related to hard-rubbish and green waste collection, renewable energy, opening hours, grocery / food delivery, and better follow up of complaints by the shire.

Table 3. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives in Mitchell Shire

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Improving footpaths, better wheelchair access, cinema, public toilets near shops, bench seats, pool, safer pedestrian crossings, more trees and plants, more walking tracks, more / better shops, markets, street lighting	430 (40.2%)
Transportation	Better / more bus services, better road maintenance, more trains, more disabled parking spaces, transportation to hospital / medical appointments	237 (22.2%)
Social Participation	Various social groups – gardening, bridge, walking, craft etc, more social events and activities, more workshops and festivals, more fitness / exercise activities for seniors, more theatre, better advertising of events	121 (11.3%)
Community Support and Health Services	Retirement villages, more aged-care facilities, more help for people at home, more hospital services	72 (6.7%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	Seniors discounts, lower rates, more age-inclusive events, more involvement with school children	40 (3.7%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	Hard-rubbish and green waste collection, renewable energy, opening hours, grocery / food delivery, better follow up of complaints by shire	38 (3.6%)
Communication and Information	Computer / Internet training, more paper-based communication, Wi-Fi in public places	28 (2.6%)
Housing	More independent living units available, help with gardening, roof and gutter cleaning and changing light bulbs	20 (1.9%)
Civic Participation and Employment	Administrative support for U3A and community groups, more voluntary work, skills training	18 (1.7%)
No Need for Changes	Nothing, nil, N/A, life is good how it is, can't think of anything, all OK	18 (1.7%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	47 (4.4%)

Seymour

Two hundred and twenty-one individuals living in Seymour responded to this question and 491 separate suggestions were received. The responses are summarised in Table 4. In Seymour, the most commonly identified theme was outdoor spaces and buildings, with 214 suggestions (43.6%) relating to this issue. The most commonly mentioned issue was the maintenance of footpaths, along with wanting a cinema, benches around town and more safe pedestrian crossings. The next most commonly identified theme was transportation with 79

suggestions (16.1%). These suggestions centred around more reliable public transport, more bus services and better road maintenance. The third most commonly identified theme was community support and health services, with 51 suggestions (10.4%) relating to this theme. In particular, the need for a retirement / lifestyle village and more help for the elderly at home were highlighted. Social participation with 49 suggestions (10.0%) was also identified as a major theme.

Table 4. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives for Seymour

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Improving footpaths, a cinema, bench seats around town, more safe crossings, better wheelchair access, a community centre, more maintenance of pedestrian crossings including lighting, public toilets near shops, more and better maintained walking tracks	214 (43.6%)
Transportation	More reliable public transport, more bus services, better road maintenance, more parking, more disabled parking spaces, transportation to hospital / medical appointments, a lift at Seymour train station	79 (16.1%)
Community Support and Health Services	A retirement / lifestyle village, more help for people at home, more visiting specialists, better medical services, doctors to do home visits	51 (10.4%)
Social Participation	More community groups, more social events and activities, more workshops and festivals, better advertising of events, more fitness activities, walking group, broader range of TAFE courses	49 (10.0%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	Hard-rubbish and green waste collection, grocery delivery, a more energy efficient town, longer opening hours at the gym, no pokies	22 (4.5%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	Intergenerational activities, free or cheaper exercising opportunities, kinder and play groups to attend nursing homes and aged-care facilities, opportunities for a buddy system – child / teen to senior person, lower rates	15 (3.1%)
Housing	More independent living units, energy efficient housing, gardening service, planning for the homeless of our town	11 (2.2%)
Communication and Information	Support with use of technology, list of skilled people / reliable handy men, more paper-based communication, list of available services, Wi-Fi in town centre	11 (2.2%)
No Need for Changes	Nil, N/A, life is good how it is, all OK	9 (1.8%)
Civic Participation and Employment	More jobs, more volunteer groups, more skills building / training, Council should regularly listen to the community	7 (1.4%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	23 (4.7%)

Broadford

Seventy-three individuals living in Broadford responded to this question and 159 separate suggestions were received. The responses are summarised in Table 5. The most commonly identified theme centred around outdoor spaces and buildings, with 74 suggestions (46.5%) relating to this issue. In particular, the maintenance of footpaths, and public toilets and bench seats around the main shopping street were highlighted. Transportation was the next most commonly identified theme, with 32 suggestions (20.1%) relating to this issue. Better public transport in general was a focus, as well as a community bus for Broadford. The third most common theme was social participation, with 20 suggestions (12.6%) relating to this issue.

Table 5. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives for Broadford

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Improving footpaths, public toilets near shops, bench seats along main street and between shops and station, drinking fountain at shops, bigger supermarket, better wheelchair access, more walking tracks, more shops	74 (46.5%)
Transportation	Better public transport, regular community bus, charging stations for mobility scooters, lights at Hamilton and High St intersection, buses to Seymour, Kilmore and Wallan, better road maintenance, taxi / uber service	32 (20.1%)
Social Participation	Various social groups – gardening, creative writing, crafts, scrabble, dancing, book club, more social events and activities, local age appropriate exercise classes, better advertising of events, organisations working together	20 (12.6%)
Communication and Information	Visitation of isolated / solitary people, technical / computer support, more paper-based communication, internet café with high speed internet, free high-speed internet at the living and learning centre	8 (5.0%)
Community Support and Health Services	More aged-care facilities, home visits	5 (3.1%)
Housing	Community housing, more retirement units, on call home help service for the elderly, help to mow the grass	4 (2.5%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	Better follow up of complaints to shire, green bins, library open on Saturdays	4 (2.5%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	Organising cheap lunches several days a week, more interaction between the younger population and the elderly, continued community funding through HACC	4 (2.5%)
Civic Participation and Employment	Administrative support for some organisations, such as U3A, help people to help themselves	2 (1.3%)
No Need for Changes	Nil, N/A	2 (1.3%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	4 (2.5%)

Kilmore

Fifty-five individuals living in Kilmore responded to this question and 124 separate suggestions were received. The responses are summarised in Table 6. The two most commonly identified themes were outdoor spaces and buildings, with 47 suggestions (37.9%) relating to this issue, and transportation, with 44 suggestions (35.5%). The most common suggestion was the better maintenance of footpaths, followed by better bus services. Community support and health

services, and social participation were also identified as main themes (8.1% and 7.3%, respectively).

Table 6. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives for Kilmore

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Improving footpaths, better wheelchair access, bench seats in the main street, safer pedestrian crossings, public toilets near shops, beautification of the main street, more street lighting, fitness equipment in parks	47 (37.9%)
Transportation	Better public transport, more bus services on weekends, buses to meet every train, better road maintenance, better parking and signs, transport between Kilmore and Broadford / Wandong, more disabled parking spaces	44 (35.5%)
Community Support and Health Services	Home assistance for the elderly, more hospital services, grief support, a Medicare drop box, stamp out elder abuse by retirement village management	10 (8.1%)
Social Participation	More social groups – laughing and happiness groups, walking groups, bridge club, more community workshops for older people, more outings with Mitchell Shire, better advertising of events	9 (7.3%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	green bins, hard-rubbish collection, better follow up of complaints by shire	4 (3.2%)
Communication and Information	Seasonal mailings informing of upcoming events, knowing how to access knowledge of what is available, NBN connection	3 (2.4%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	More opportunities for all age events, more seniors discounts	2 (1.6%)
No Need for Changes	N/A, I am content with my situation as I have good friends	2 (1.6%)
Civic Participation and Employment	Support for addition to U3A and Seymour senior citizens centre	1 (0.8%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	2 (1.6%)

Wallan

Thirty-six individuals living in Wallan responded to this question and 79 separate suggestions were received. The responses are summarised in Table 7. The most commonly identified theme was outdoor spaces and buildings, with 31 suggestions (39.2%) relating to this issue. In particular, the maintenance of footpaths was highlighted, along with wanting a pool and cinema, and better retail shopping. The next most commonly identified theme was

transportation, with 24 suggestions (30.4%). These suggestions focused on better public transport in and around Wallan.

Table 7. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives for Wallan

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Improving footpaths, a pool, cinema, better retail shopping, a large shopping centre, more bench seats, a drinking fountain, develop walks along rivers and creeks, pedestrian crossing at Windham and Queen St bus stop	31 (39.2%)
Transportation	Buses to Kilmore and Epping, better road maintenance, more disabled parking, better connected public transport internal and external to Wallan, get rid of trucks from the main street	24 (30.4%)
Social Participation	More activities – art class, craft class, exercise groups, community connection groups, local community events, better advertising of events, music performances earlier in the day	9 (11.4%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	Involve all members of the community, lower rates, buddy system for people who need occasional help, visits to welcome new arrivals, don't assume all older people are pensioners	7 (8.9%)
No Need for Changes	N/A, personally do not need any more activities	2 (2.5%)
Housing	Increased safety of homes and quick access to emergency support and services	1 (1.3%)
Civic Participation and Employment	To have a register of people and their skills for volunteering opportunities	1 (1.3%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	A better balance between sports and the arts in the recreation budget	1 (1.3%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	3 (3.8%)

Tallarook

Eighteen individuals living in Tallarook responded to this question and 31 separate suggestions were received. The responses are summarised in Table 8. The two most commonly identified themes were social participation and transportation, with 7 suggestions each (22.6%). In particular, more social gatherings and more trains to stop at Tallarook station were suggested. Outdoor spaces and buildings was the third most commonly identified theme (16.1%).

Table 8. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives for Tallarook

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Social Participation	More social gatherings – at least monthly and advertised, bridge club, book club, more group physical activities, more theatre	7 (22.6%)
Transportation	More trains to stop at Tallarook station, more disabled parking spaces, bitumen the roads, local transport connections for farm residents	7 (22.6%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Cheap meeting place, more shops, disabled access to shops, cinema	5 (16.1%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	More integration with children or youth groups and peers in their 30's	3 (9.7%)
Community Support and Health Services	A retirement village	1 (3.2%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	Longer opening hours of libraries / leisure centre	1 (3.2%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	7 (22.6%)

Wandong & Heathcote Junction

Twenty-two individuals living in Wandong or Heathcote Junction responded to this question and 56 separate suggestions were received. The responses are summarised in Table 9. The two most commonly identified themes were outdoor spaces and buildings, with 20 suggestions (35.7%) relating to this issue, and transportation, with 14 suggestions (25.0%). In particular, issues to do with the maintenance of footpaths were highlighted, along with better public transport, better road maintenance, and bus services between Wandong, Kilmore and Wallan. Social participation was the third most commonly identified theme (10.7%).

Table 9. Age-friendly improvements or initiatives for Wandong & Heathcote Junction

Domain	Examples of Responses	Number of Responses (%)
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Improving footpaths, better wheelchair access, more maintenance of weeds on street verges, library facilities, heated pool, more walking tracks, lights at the beginning and more maintenance of the G'Day trail	20 (35.7%)
Transportation	Better public transport, better road maintenance, bus service between Wandong, Kilmore and Wallan, bus services from train station to the town, change the bypass location	14 (25.0%)
Social Participation	More community groups, social night for singles, walking groups, local gentle exercise group for seniors, better advertising of events, a morning or afternoon card day	6 (10.7%)
Doesn't fit within a domain	Ban dog breeding in residential areas, hard-rubbish removal, firewood delivery to seniors, a more proactive and visible elected Councillor presence	5 (8.9%)
Housing	Do not reduce block sizes, no high-density living	2 (3.6%)
Respect and Social Inclusion	Lower rates, more involvement with looking after children	2 (3.6%)
Communication and Information	More paper-based communication	1 (1.8%)
Community Support and Health Services	More home carers	1 (1.8%)
Not Relevant	Answer not relevant to the question	5 (8.9%)

End of Report