



## Positive Ageing Strategy

September 2012

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**Resolution No. 20.028/2**

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**Resolution No. 19.004/16\***

**The Positive Ageing Strategy 2012 was developed following extensive community consultation by the Huon Valley Positive Ageing Advisory Committee with the assistance of consultant, Janine Combes of Community Focus. The Positive Ageing Strategy format, being developed in 2012, reflects the Council Strategic Plan (2010-2015) focus areas however it remains a relevant working document aligning with the Council's Vision and Strategic Plan 2015 – 2025 objectives.**

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## SECTION 1

### *Why have a Positive Ageing Strategy?*

By 2032 it is estimated that 30.7% of the total population of the Huon Valley will be aged 65 years and over (5,050 people). By this time there may be as many as 638 people aged 85 years+ in our community and we will see more and more people who are centenarians (aged over 100 years).<sup>1</sup>

Council has developed the Positive Ageing Strategy so that it is well placed to respond to these changes.

Across all levels of Government there is a shift towards 'active ageing' which recognises and supports the desires of older people to continue to work, socialise, participate, contribute and engage with the community as they age.<sup>2</sup>

Many older community members experience specific issues which may impact on their capacity to maintain their health, well being and independence (e.g. social isolation, having meaningful activity, hearing loss, reduced sight, inability to drive or walk, living on a lower income).

Older people are substantial contributors or potential contributors to communities. Many wish to keep working in some form into their later years, although they may wish to apply their skills and knowledge in

different ways. The challenge is to create opportunities for these skills to be used flexibly and meaningfully.

The number of older people self reporting a mental health condition is increasing in Australia<sup>3</sup> with 9.5% of older people reporting at least one long-term mental health problem. However we know that fostering interaction with others has a positive impact on mental health and increases independence.

Initiatives that benefit seniors are also likely to be of benefit to others (e.g. more accessible public facilities, better health services, improved public transport).

A Positive Ageing Advisory Committee made up of community members from across the Local Government Area was established to support the development of the Strategy.

This Strategy will help to ensure that the core activities of Council take into account the needs of older people. A review process is built into the Strategy to ensure that it remains current.

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<sup>1</sup> Huon Valley Population Projections, Demographic Change Advisory Council, Tasmania.

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Council of Tasmania and COTA: Discussion Paper, Older Tasmanians and Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum, October 2011.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, 2007, Older Australians at a Glance, Canberra.

## THE ROLE OF HUON VALLEY COUNCIL IN PROMOTING POSITIVE AGEING

An ageing population will impact on all areas of Council operations including:

- demand for services and facilities
- land-use decision making
- revenue-raising
- how Council communicates with the community
- staffing demographics.<sup>4</sup>

The Huon Valley Positive Ageing Strategy provides a framework for how the Council will work with the community and other levels of Government to address the challenges which come from a changing demographic profile.

Not all of the actions required to support older people to live healthy and meaningful lives will be the responsibility of the Huon Valley Council.

However, Council can act as an advocate to promote the importance of the issues identified in this strategy as well as addressing those initiatives which are within its scope of activity.

The Positive Ageing Strategy whilst reflecting the Council Strategic Plan (2010-2015) focus areas and the Huon Valley 2020 Community Plan it also reflects key strategic and planning documents developed since 2012.

The Positive Ageing Strategy outlines how older people will be part of developing the

sense of place, dynamic economy and the connected and thriving community identified as important in the Community Vision.

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<sup>4</sup>Planning the local government response to ageing and place, Local Government Association of NSW, Noel Baum and Natalie Jackson, 2004.

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## PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE AGEING

The factors that are commonly cited to contribute to positive ageing are:

- Social connection
- Involvement in meaningful activity
- Being physically and intellectually 'active'
- Feeling safe
- Having the financial means to live a comfortable life.

These are facilitated by: having access to suitable and affordable transport, age-friendly built environments, access to health, social, recreational activities and other services, having adequate income and appropriate housing.

The following principles were identified during community consultation in the Huon Valley as being important to promote positive ageing:

### **Respect**

- Treating older people as knowledgeable, capable individuals who have skills to contribute and are entitled to make their own decisions.

### **Inclusion**

- Seeking the involvement of older residents in decision-making and planning.

### **Valuing**

- Structuring community consultation so that older people can easily contribute.

### **Communication**

- Ensuring that information is provided in a way which is accessible to older people.
- Ensuring that older people know the services and supports which are available to them and how they can be accessed.

*"I want to grow old actively involved in the community in which I live."*

*"I have good family and friends, a great community and an Independent Living Unit in a great location."*

## PROFILE OF THE HUON VALLEY

Huon Valley Local Government Area (LGA) is the second largest in the State in terms of land area. However, only 14% of the land is within private ownership with a key feature being large tracts of publicly owned reserves and forest.<sup>5</sup>

The Valley has a population of 15,140<sup>6</sup>. The population is dispersed across five key townships and the rural hinterlands which surround each township.

Many older people live on farms and in isolated locations, some without their own transport. Not all have family supports within the immediate vicinity.

The Huon Valley has also become an important retirement lifestyle destination. Older newcomers to the community may have few family supports or social connections at the time of arrival.

The Local Government Area is one of the faster growing ones in the State. While the overall size of the population in the Huon Valley is predicted to increase by 8.3% between 2012 and 2032 the make-up of the population is undergoing significant change with the proportion of residents aged 70 years and older projected to increase by 149.7% over the same period.<sup>7</sup>

The average life expectancy in Tasmania is also increasing. By 2032 it is estimated

that there will be 638 people aged in the 85 to 100+ age group in the Huon Valley and it is likely that there may be three times as many women in this group as men if the current trends in life expectancy continue.<sup>8</sup>

Many of those now in old age experienced the Depression and Second World War. They saved hard, bought their own homes and have reasonable retirement incomes.

However, things may be different in the future. People born from the 1960's onwards may have significant debts from their higher education and, if they have entered the housing market, are faced with large mortgages.<sup>9</sup>

This factor combined with the fact that in general the residents of the Huon Valley experience higher rates of socio-economic disadvantage compared to residents of Tasmania as a whole is likely to have an impact on the need for services in the future.

Older residents may be more likely to be reliant upon publicly provided support and health services and may be more likely to require support in finding suitable accommodation.

As socio-economic factors have a significant impact on health outcomes the higher rates of socio-economic disadvantage are likely to translate into

<sup>5</sup> GHD, Huon Valley Land Use Strategy, Executive Summary.

<sup>6</sup> 2011 Census Quickstats: Huon Valley (M) Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>7</sup> Demographic Change Advisory Council Population Projections, Huon Valley LGA.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 3201.0 Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories, June 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Planning the local government response to ageing and place, Local Government Association of NSW, Noel Baum and Natalie Jackson, 2004.

less well older people who may experience higher rates of hospitalisation, chronic disease and incapacity unless future health promotion initiatives begin to positively influence these trends.

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#### HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The Huon Valley Positive Ageing Strategy was developed during the period March to September 2012 in conjunction with the Positive Ageing Advisory Committee of Council.

The process for developing the Strategy involved:

- Five community forums – one in each of the key townships across the Valley
- A stakeholder forum for service providers and community group representatives
- Fact Sheets
- Surveys
- Letters to community groups and stakeholders
- Regular Positive Ageing Advisory Committee meetings
- Opportunities for local residents to provide written responses outlining their views for positive ageing strategies
- A workshop with Councillors
- A draft Positive Ageing Strategy being made available for a level 4 public consultation during August 2012.

## KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE CONSULTATIONS

The key issues identified during the consultation process in 2012 were:

- Opportunities for social contact (group and individual based)
- Feeling useful and valued
- The need for improved coordination and promotion of available transport options
- Information: knowing what services are available and who to contact for assistance
- Access to affordable, local educational opportunities
- Assistance to continue living at home
- Access to affordable, ongoing physical activity programs
- Access to health services
- Having local, affordable accommodation options for those who can no longer live at home.

*"I think we need more opportunities for all age groups to mix."*

*"I want help to stay in my home.... you know help with things like changing light globes, my garden...."*

*"The bus services have improved but I think we need to advertise more.. some people need help to get on and off the bus too"*

*"Mostly I think people just don't know about the services that are available."*

*"If we have more affordable exercise programs it will extend the period that ageing residents remain self sufficient."*

*"Older people need places to meet, to talk and have fun together, and often they need help to get there too."*

*"Support for older people using new forms of technology like mobile phones, Facebook..."*

## OUR VISION FOR POSITIVE AGEING IN THE HUON VALLEY

For the Huon Valley to be a place where:

- Older people are valued, welcome and visible
- Information about services and activities is easily accessible
- Townships are designed to make them friendly and accessible to older people
- A range of services and activities are available to meet a wide variety of interests and abilities
- Older people have opportunities to continue to learn and participate in paid or volunteer work
- There is a range of affordable, local accommodation options for older people who no longer live at home
- Age appropriate health and support services are readily available to all regardless of income
- Available transport services are well known and cater for older people who may have limited mobility and income
- The community draws on the skills of older people and allows them to share their skills and life experience with others.

## SECTION 2

### STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The Positive Ageing Strategy format reflects five key areas of focus that align with the Council 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and Huon Valley 2020 Community Plan. It should be noted that these focus areas also align with the Council's Strategic Plan 2015 to 2025 Strategic Objectives. This is important so that the Positive Ageing Strategy contributes to other Council decision-making and planning processes.

1. A sense of place for older people.
2. Older people as part of a dynamic economy.
3. A connected and thriving community which is inclusive of older people.
4. A service organisation for older people.
5. A high performance organisation which engages older people.

# 1. A sense of place for older people

**Goal: To ensure that the Huon Valley provides the physical environment (natural and man-made) that promotes an active, connected lifestyle for older people**

## TOWNSHIPS

### Actions

Work with the Township Committees to make townships more livable for older residents and visitors (e.g. installing age appropriate seating along walking routes).

## LAND USE PLANNING

### Actions

Implement the Huon Valley Land Use and Development Strategy to ensure that development within each of the existing residential settlements in the Valley promotes ease of access to services for older community members.

Require developers, where appropriate, to contribute to community and recreational facilities as per the Land use Strategy.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Actions

Work with the Huon Valley Access Advisory Committee to consider results of an audit of Council owned facilities across the Local Government Area in order to facilitate greater access by older people to these facilities.

Consider the ageing demographic when establishing asset management plans.

Work with the Department of State Growth (DSG) to promote safe areas to cross within Townships and features that may reduce vehicle speed within townships.

Continue to upgrade townships and parks, reserves and sports grounds toilets to ensure that they are accessible to older people (e.g. in design, location, adequate signage).

Facilitate inter-generational family activities (e.g. providing age appropriate seating and shelter near play equipment).

Consider, as part of the Council asset planning processes, the installation of hearing loops,<sup>10</sup> sound proofing, and heating/cooling in Council owned facilities.

## WATERWAYS AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### Actions

Continue to upgrade marine infrastructure to promote access and use by older people.

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<sup>10</sup> A hearing loop is a type of assistive listening device that magnetically transmits sounds to hearing aids and cochlear implants. The Hearing Loop system cuts out the background noise which often makes it difficult for people with a hearing impairment to understand speech. They can be fitted in meeting rooms or operate as portable counter loops. [www.actdrc.org.au](http://www.actdrc.org.au) or [www.deafsocietynsw.org.au](http://www.deafsocietynsw.org.au)

Provide a range of graded walking track experiences to encourage older people to be physically active.

Consider the range of user groups when developing new walking tracks or upgrading existing assets (including companion pet owners, those using mobility aids, walkers and joggers)

Provide at least one accessible, low impact walking track suitable to the range of user groups in each main township.

Where possible construct additional pavements within townships to link with existing walking tracks.

## **ARTS, HERITAGE AND CULTURE**

### **Actions**

Promote and support organisations within the Huon Valley to apply for funding for 'living history'<sup>11</sup> projects which have an ongoing capacity to strengthen relationships between older and younger community members.

Promote the involvement of older people in the arts and cultural life in the Valley by offering specific activities, ensuring all community events are effectively promoted to older residents and venues are accessible.

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<sup>11</sup> These projects involve older residents telling their life stories so that they can be shared with younger generations. They may involve film, audio recording, print or other forms of communication.

## 2. Older people as part of a dynamic economy

**Goal: To have a local economy which harnesses the skills of older people and provides goods, services and facilities which will attract and retain older community members.**

### HARNESSING THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF OLDER PEOPLE

#### Actions

Work with the local business community to create opportunities for older people to continue to use their skills in paid and unpaid work.<sup>12</sup>

Adopt Human Resource Management practices which enable workforce flexibility and retain older workers (e.g. part time jobs, flexible leave to enable periods of travel, transition to retirement schemes).

Seek the involvement of older community members as volunteers to enable their knowledge to be shared with new residents and to build community connections between 'old and new' residents.

Investigate the potential to establish a home maintenance volunteer program similar to the Clarence Community Volunteer Service Program.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Council Annual Plan 2011-2012.

<sup>13</sup> There are many roles that a Volunteer Service could perform for older people in the Huon Valley, including basic home maintenance, gardening, providing support to access public transport or home visiting. Many of these supports are

Promote the role of Business Enterprise Centres and the Huon LINC in assisting older people to start new enterprises.

### ONGOING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

#### Actions

Work with Huon LINC, Job Network Providers and Volunteering Tasmania to promote flexible skills development opportunities for older residents who may wish to change careers, learn new skills or share their skills with others in a volunteer capacity.

### TOURISM

#### Actions

Promote the Huon Valley as an 'older person friendly' destination (e.g. the availability of gentle walks, accessible picnic and toilet facilities).

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currently offered but there is not a coordinated system for harnessing these resources.

### 3. A connected and thriving community which is inclusive of older people

**Goal: Provide services, opportunities and information to foster strong connections and a high level of involvement by older people in all aspects of community life in the Huon Valley.**

#### COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS

##### Actions

Work with other service provider organisations across the Valley to continue to improve information dissemination and ensure a diverse range of methods is used.

Use a variety of methods to disseminate the Council Information Booklet to as many older residents as possible (e.g. via health services, Huon LINC, chemists, Council offices as well as online).

Use the Council website, written publications, the Huon News and events to promote Council activities available for older people within the Huon Valley.

Through the Rural Health Unit continue to offer and promote a variety of health and wellbeing activities for seniors in locations across the Local Government Area.

Where possible encourage inter-connections between older residents in the different townships.

Respond to increasing demand resulting from the changing demographic profile by

seeking additional funds for the Rural Health Program.

Work with other levels of Government and seniors groups to ensure that there are informal, affordable, accessible facilities for older people to participate in social activities within each of the key townships.

Bring relevant organisations together to discuss the viability of establishing a volunteer home visiting program for older people who may not wish to engage in group programs or require a 'stepping stone' to participation in group programs.

#### HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

##### Actions

Continue to work with the State Government to promote a range of health promotion activities that keep older people active, minimise the impacts of lifestyle factors and combat the impact of chronic disease.

Offer information on programs, equipment and volunteer opportunities which may be of interest to older people at the Rural Health and Wellbeing Expo and at other significant events held in the Huon.

Support the retention of respite and rural health beds at Huon Eldercare and the Esperance Multi-Purpose Health Centre.

Continue to support and promote walking groups across the Huon Valley.

Promote the role of Advocacy services to and by older people to ensure that they can access services for which they are eligible.

#### ACCESS TO LOCAL MEDICAL AND ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES

##### **Actions**

Work in partnership with General Practitioners and communities to operate medical services and provide infrastructure, workforce training and development in townships where service gaps exist.

Develop an attraction and retention strategy for GPs and allied health professionals.

Encourage health providers to deliver home based services for older people.

Review and implement the Council Rural Health Strategy.

#### PROVISION OF AGED CARE AND HOUSING

##### **Actions**

Work with developers, community groups and aged care providers to foster alternative, quality, affordable aged care housing options within easy reach of community and health services.

Identify suitable sites within townships that may provide future aged care facilities or independent living options for older people.

Work with community groups to improve the coordination of services to older people across the Huon Valley (e.g. community transport, home visiting, involvement in social activities).

Promote awareness among older people of the assistance available to them to maintain an independent life (e.g. through volunteers groups, non-government service providers, paid contractors).

Work with community organisations to promote awareness of commonly occurring health conditions and generate community support for people affected by them within the community.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

### Actions

Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the development of Council infrastructure and encourage the uptake of these principles by private developers.

Promote connections by older people with a volunteer home visiting service or a local older person's community organisation so that they have a key contact point within their local area.

## EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Actions

Work with health and community groups to ensure older people are aware of how to contact emergency services.

Include demonstrations of personal safety equipment at the Rural Health Expo and other community events (e.g. emergency call pendants).

## RECREATION AND SPORT

### Actions

Consider the needs of older people when prioritising walking track provision (e.g. near residential aged care facilities, routes commonly used by older people).

Continue to upgrade parks and playgrounds to encourage all year and all weather use by older people and their families.

Work with local sports centres to promote their use by the over 55 years age group.

Work with small, informal local community organisations to address the costs associated with their use of Council owned recreation and meeting facilities.

Promote walking tracks across the Local Government Area and a grading of walks for use by local residents and visitors.

Encourage older people to become involved as volunteers in local recreational and sporting groups.

## 4. A service organisation for older people

**Goal: For Huon Valley Council to be viewed by its community as 'age aware' and highly responsive to the needs of older people.**

### TRANSPORT

#### Actions

Advocate for a local, coordinated response to community transport options in the Huon Valley and for continued expansion of flexible, multi-size transport options for older people living outside of townships.

Continue to disseminate information on the range of transport options that are available to seniors including community cars and buses.

Work with transport providers and other organisations to achieve older person friendly service times, installation of accessible features on buses and provision of age appropriate transport shelters and signage.

Work with service clubs, community groups and transport providers to connect individual older people who wish to use buses with volunteers who can assist them with timetables and access.

Disseminate information on the temporary Disability Parking Permits for older people who may be temporarily incapacitated by ill-health.

### ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH

#### Actions

Promote access to programs for the safe disposal of garden chemicals (e.g. Chemsart) for older residents.

Link older residents who have properties containing invasive weeds to volunteer groups which may be able to assist them with weed removal and management.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

#### ACTIONS

Consider the provision of bi-annual assistance to older residents without transport who have large rubbish items or green waste items for disposal.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

#### Actions

Consider the installation of facilities that will improve access for people with hearing or sight impairment to Council offices (e.g. Counter Hearing Systems).<sup>14</sup>

Provide information on the Council website about which meeting rooms have hearing support equipment like Hearing Loops available.

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<sup>14</sup> Counter Hearing systems allow customers to pick up the handset and listen to the staff member's voice at an amplified level (suitable for those wearing a hearing aid and those who are not).

As the Council website is updated adopt a design that will enable it to be navigable by those using screen readers<sup>15</sup>.

Review the Council style guide to promote written documentation that is accessible for older people (e.g. large print, appropriate fonts and formats).

## CEMETERIES

### **Actions**

Consider access by older people and design features that will make them 'older person friendly' when upgrading cemeteries (e.g. path widths, provision of seating, location in relation to transport).

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<sup>15</sup> A screen reader is a [software application](#) that analyses text and then presents it to the reader through speech or Braille. It is often used with a screen magnifier.  
Source: Wikipedia

## 5. A high performance organisation which engages older people

**Goal: Council is regarded as an organisation that actively involves older people in planning for the future**

### COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

#### **Actions**

Provide Council support to a Positive Ageing Advisory Committee.

Implement the strategies outlined in this Positive Ageing Strategy and review progress in three years time.

Adopt approaches which are likely to engage older people in Council planning and consultation processes (e.g. choice of older person friendly venues, held at appropriate times of the day, appropriate promotion methods).

## Implementation and review of the Positive Ageing Strategy

Implementation and review of the Positive Ageing Strategy will occur by:

- Incorporating the Positive Ageing Strategy actions in other key Council planning documents as they are reviewed (e.g. Rural Health Strategy, Playground Strategy, Public Toilets Strategy, Asset Management Plans)
- Ongoing monitoring by the Positive Ageing Advisory Committee
- A review conducted at the end of a three year period.