



Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

Age-friendly WA? A challenge for government

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**Community Development and Justice
Standing Committee**

**Age-friendly WA?
A challenge for government**

Report No. 7

Presented by

Ms M.M. Quirk, MLA

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 20 November 2014

Executive Summary

THE decline in fertility, increase in longevity and decrease in mortality have combined to produce a worldwide boom in the ageing population. In industrial countries more than a fifth of the population is comprised of people aged 60 or more, but by 2050 this cohort is expected to account for a third of the population.

In Western Australia the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is currently 12 per cent. By 2032 it is expected to be around 16 per cent, with a higher proportion (18.6%) in regional WA than in greater Perth (15.1%). Many regional WA communities already have a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over than the State and national average.

Governments need to plan for the economic and social changes that the ageing population will bring. But the aged are far from a homogeneous group; there are social and economic inequities, a range of health and physical capabilities, and a diversity of views and expectations about retirement.

While commentators have been worrying about the ageing baby-boomer “time-bomb” for many years, increased life expectancy is in fact an indication of prosperity. Nevertheless, adjustments need to be made to accommodate the extra years of life. Planning needs to be long term and policies need to focus on preventative health interventions, reducing social inequality earlier in life, community care, longer working lives and age-friendly environments.

Western Australia’s over-arching policy document addressing ageing is *An Age-Friendly WA: The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-2017* (the Framework). It identifies five key pathways to achieving an age-friendly WA:

- Promoting health and wellbeing;
- Access to essential services;
- Economic security and protection of rights;
- Welcoming and well-planned communities; and
- Opportunities to contribute.

The Framework was developed following the involvement of the Department for Communities (now the Department for Local Government and Communities) and the City of Melville in the World Health Organisation’s Age-friendly Cities Project.

The Framework declares that all sectors need to “take action and plan together”. This Inquiry aimed to determine how well the Framework is guiding State Government policy, and whether it is achieving its goal of creating an age-friendly WA.

Implicit in the Framework is the need for all agencies to embrace its recommendations and objectives and to undertake core business cognisant of the impact of their actions and policies on older Western Australians. In the course of the Inquiry it became apparent that the Framework did not feature in the decision-making of a number of key agencies. For that reason the Committee decided to ascertain in what areas the Framework could achieve greater penetration within government.

In a range of areas (discussed below), the Committee concluded there was no agency charged with prosecuting the Framework, little inter-agency communication on implementing it, few or no resources attached to the Framework, and no leadership or responsibility assigned.

What is an age-friendly community?

As explained in **Chapter Two**, age-friendly communities as a formal concept grew out of the United Nations’ Year of the Older Person in 1999. The UN adopted a more proactive role in influencing ageing-related policies at the international level and in 2002 governments adopted the *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* at the Second United Nations World Assembly.

Following this the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the *Active Ageing* policy framework to focus attention on active and healthy ageing. The four pillars of the *Active Ageing* framework are health, participation, security and life-long learning. To assist communities in putting the *Active Ageing* framework into practice, the WHO created the Age-friendly Cities Project, which involved 33 cities across the world (including Melville). The project was designed to serve as a starting point for age-friendly community development initiatives across the globe.

Through the community-based research of the Age-friendly Cities Project, eight key indicators of an age-friendly city were identified:

- Community support and health services;
- Outdoor spaces and buildings;
- Transportation;
- Housing;
- Social participation;
- Respect and social inclusion;
- Civic participation and employment; and
- Communication and information.

With the culmination of the project in 2007, the WHO launched the *Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide*, which led to the establishment of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities. Since 2010 there has been a growing network of communities worldwide participating in the program. Communities that sign up to the network signal their commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment that benefits an ageing population. The City of Melville and the City of Rockingham are the only WA members.

Early adopters of the age-friendly movement internationally were Portland and New York in the United States, and Manchester in England and County Louth in Ireland. Canada is the country with the most extensive uptake of the age-friendly approach. Between 2007 and 2011, more than 560 communities in eight Canadian provinces identified as being age-friendly.

How age-friendly is WA?

In WA, the uptake has not been as dramatic. As detailed in **Chapter Three**, many local governments have begun the journey towards an age-friendly community but few have completely embraced the Department for Local Government and Communities' (DLGC) Age-Friendly Communities Framework. In 2006-07, the Department for Communities provided four local government authorities (LGAs) with research grants and a "toolkit" based on the WHO framework to assess the needs of their ageing communities.

In 2010-11, a further 23 local governments were funded to undertake community research with seniors, with a view to adopting an age-friendly approach to their planning. The outcomes and key findings from the research were collected into the *Age-Friendly Communities Collective Examination of Western Australian Local Government Research Report*, but it is unclear how many local governments progressed to the next steps of incorporating the findings into a strategic plan and monitoring implementation.

Melville, Mandurah, Fremantle, Rockingham and Cockburn are the leaders in implementing the age-friendly framework in the metropolitan area.

In regional areas, the main input has come from the State-wide *Ageing in the Bush* initiative, being managed by the Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC) on behalf of the Regional Development Council. The initiative aims to describe the key impediments and opportunities for ageing in community across the regional areas of the State, and formulate an ageing in the bush strategy. Funding for regional local governments to conduct age-friendly projects has also just been announced.

This report assesses the age-friendliness of WA across a number of key areas, beginning with health and wellbeing.

Health and wellbeing

The *Model of Care for the Older Person*, the Department of Health's main policy document dealing with older people, stipulates that managing older people in the health service environment is based on age-friendly principles and practices. The model is designed to ensure that the WA health system is less centred on hospitals and more orientated to the care needs of the older person.

A key health issue in the older population is dementia, estimated to be the second leading cause of overall burden of disease – and the leading cause of disability burden – among people aged 65 and over in Australia. In WA about 30,700 people over the age of 60 years have a dementia diagnosis. The Department of Health, via WA Health, has partnered with Alzheimer's Australia WA to raise awareness of dementia in the community and engage in a capacity building strategy with community care providers. However, more data on dementia is needed to target services better. Dementia rates in the Aboriginal population are among the highest in the world (about five times that of the non-Aboriginal population) but this has remained largely unrecognised by health workers and service providers.

In conjunction with the Federal Government the State Government provides a range of at-home services for older people, but Carers WA felt that this could erode the ability of carers to maintain control over care for family members. Some local care providers also expressed concern over the impending transfer of Home and Community Care (HACC) services to Commonwealth control.

The Committee heard concerns also that the subacute sector is under-resourced and that there is not enough awareness of and access to palliative care services, especially in Aboriginal communities.

The importance of physical activity for improving health outcomes in later life was emphasised. Government-supported programs such as Exergaming, Living Longer Living Stronger and Stay on Your Feet had been very successful in getting seniors active and preventing falls, and it is important that resourcing for these is expanded to enable access by as many older people as possible.

Drug and alcohol use is a serious health issue for the ageing community, including the unintentional misuse of prescription drugs. Ongoing research and education and awareness programs are required to address this issue. This may be addressed in the forthcoming *10 Year Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan*, which the Mental Health Commission says will address mental health services for older people.

Meanwhile, the dental health needs of older people are apparently being addressed in a national plan for oral health, *Healthy Mouths Healthy Lives: Australia's 2015-2024*, yet to be delivered.

Another report, the national *Health Workforce 2025*, highlights the need for essential, co-ordinated, long-term reforms by government, professional groups and the higher education and training sectors to ensure delivery of a sustainable health workforce that meets the healthcare needs of all Australians.

However, WA Health has acknowledged that retaining its workforce is a challenge and has developed a 10-year strategic workforce plan in an effort to address the critical shortage of health staff. The Committee remains concerned that the demand for aged care staff who can meet the diverse needs of the ageing population will not be met.

In the meantime, the Department of Health's *Being Age Friendly* training package, designed to deliver flexible training across the health sector to embed age-friendly principles and practices into the clinical practices of acute settings and other sectors such as community, residential and general practice, will assist in educating the workforce on care for the ageing.

Transport

Accessible and safe transport is a key concern of older people. Thanks to Seniors Card entitlements that allow free travel in non-peak times, public transport is generally affordable for metropolitan seniors. Seniors in regional areas face greater challenges. With the withdrawal of Transwa coach services linking to the Australind train service from Bunbury to Perth, many seniors were being forced to drive to Perth for appointments instead of taking the train. In some country areas, there is no public transport at all. This is addressed in part by the Country Age Pension Fuel Card, which provides \$550 towards fuel or taxi services for eligible pensioners.

However this fixed amount does not take account of the longer distances that people in more remote locations have to travel. Also, it is not helpful for seniors who find it difficult to drive long distances.

While the Public Transport Authority works toward achieving an accessibility standard of a bus or train service within 500m of every property at a peak-time frequency of every 15 minutes, this is clearly not being achieved in outer metropolitan areas. The lack of bus shelters also means seniors are reluctant to use bus services, even if they are within walking distance.

The lack of parking at train stations after 9am – when travel becomes free for Seniors Card holders – is another impediment to seniors using public transport. A perception that public transport is not safe also affects use. The Public Transport Authority needs to investigate this perception further. Older people also need to be supported in their

transition from driving, including the loss of their driver's licence. Obtaining a Photo Card for identification purposes is an unnecessarily complex process.

Housing

The availability of affordable, accessible and suitable housing is particularly important for older people who value a sense of security and the ability to age in place. The State's Affordable Housing Strategy (AHS) is the first of its kind in Australia and has a whole-of-government approach to increasing the supply of affordable housing, with a minimum target of 20,000 additional affordable housing opportunities in WA by 2020. The Department of Housing advised that as of August 2014, 15,900 new affordable homes had been delivered, which included affordable housing options for seniors.

But the Community Housing Coalition of WA is concerned that the AHS has will not deliver a single extra social housing dwelling, and the WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS) said urgent action was needed to address the critical shortfalls in supply. Seniors are also increasingly concerned about security of tenure. Older people living with the uncertainty of insecure tenure, coupled with spending most of their income on rent, were vulnerable to homelessness, according to COTA WA. The incidence of first-time homelessness is increasing amongst the elderly with women particularly vulnerable.

The WA Local Government Association (WALGA) told the Committee that one of the biggest challenges faced by local governments is the provision of suitably designed housing stock that caters for the needs of individuals as they age, particularly for those aged over 55. There was an increasing demand from older people to live in the locality in which they had spent most of their lives, rather than having to relocate to somewhere with more suitable housing. Stamp duty is also a barrier to downsizing and the Committee supports the numerous organisations who have recommended that it is abolished or at least reduced for seniors.

Future-proofing homes by incorporating universal design principles and features designed to help individuals remain in their own home throughout the life course is important for an age-friendly community. The Department of Housing said that where appropriate, it had incorporated universal design principles into new buildings and into all standard accommodation design briefs for social housing.

The Committee supports WALGA's suggestion that government tenders specify that new buildings comply with the principles of universal design.

Outdoor spaces and built environments

Well-designed outdoor spaces and built environments can enable older people to age in place and remain an integral part of a community. Providing such an environment requires a considerable degree of planning as well as cooperation from developers and

other sectors of government. Ensuring the safety of pedestrians is a major consideration, but public infrastructure, such as seating and accessible public buildings, is also important.

The Department of Planning policy documents *Directions 2031 and beyond* and *Liveable Neighbourhoods* address many of the points on the WHO age-friendly community checklist, the former focussing more on the integration of housing and transport and the latter on urban development design. However, developers are not always able to comply with the State Government policies because related infrastructure – such as public transport – does not exist. Also, the *Liveable Neighbourhoods* guidelines apply only to new housing developments, providing little benefit to people ageing-in-place in established suburbs.

Older people consistently complain that the green man/flashing red man signal is not long enough to enable them to cross the road safely. While the crossing signal is based on a walking speed of 1.2m per second, a UK study has shown that the mean walking speed of people aged 65 or more is 0.9m per second for men and 0.8m per second for women. According to several WA local governments, Main Roads WA will not be persuaded to extend the crossing time. The Committee recommends a trial of Singapore's Green Man + system, which enables seniors to activate extra time at pedestrian crossings with their seniors' card.

Creating "liveable communities" means providing support services that are easily accessible to meet health, education, culture, personal and social needs. It also means designing buildings and outdoor spaces that take account of the challenges for older people. WA could learn from projects in the US, where improvements to the liveability of communities are made by leveraging support from corporations and by being more creative in the use of existing resources.

Social isolation, respect and inclusion

The way in which communities are planned and the accessibility and affordability of essential services has an impact on social isolation. The Framework notes that seniors are a diverse group and that all seniors should be treated with respect. In terms of inclusion (of minority groups in particular), the Framework identifies the need for language services and cultural competency training for aged care staff and seniors' services staff, culturally appropriate aged care and support for Aboriginal seniors, and disability awareness training and assistance to help people with disability participate in activities.

Feedback from seniors to their local councils indicates that affordability of events is a barrier to social participation, and they would like more access to free or low cost community events and entertainment. Local governments are seen as having primary responsibility for providing opportunities for seniors to be involved in the community,

but there is also a perceived need for the State Government to provide programs to deal with the life transitions which may be a catalyst for social isolation.

The government also needs to take a stronger lead in campaigns to bolster respect for the elderly, according to some witnesses. WA's Equal Opportunity Commission reported that for the first time, age discrimination was one of the top three complaints made to the Commission, overtaking sex discrimination. The Committee is of the view that while a lot is spoken and written about the importance of respecting the senior members of our society, there is little or no action to encourage this.

Seniors who are from a non-English speaking background, are gay or are disabled are more likely to be excluded from social activities than other groups. While some culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, such as the Chinese and Italian, have established specialised community-based services for seniors, communities which have not been established for as long cannot access culturally appropriate services. According to the Independent Living Centre, while WA is more multicultural than any other State in terms of percentage of population, the approach to policy and funding is "segmented and fragmented".

The Office of Multicultural Interests' 2012 report, *Ageing in Culturally and Linguistically Communities: An Analysis of Trends and Major Issues in Western Australia*, was designed to inform State Government policy and planning in addressing the needs of older people from CaLD backgrounds. It highlights the need for an up-to-date multicultural aged care strategy and policy, which should include the provision of culturally appropriate aged care services.

Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) also find themselves excluded from mainstream seniors services. There are approximately 24,000 older LGBTI adults in WA, making this the largest recognised 'special needs' group who are potentially recipients of aged care services, according GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc (GRAI). However, 86 per cent of residential care providers in a 2010 study claimed that they did not have any LGBTI people in their care.

GRAI has a two-year contract to deliver Commonwealth-funded training to the aged care sector and believes service providers – and their staff in particular – are keen to provide safe and inclusive services now that they are aware of the discriminatory practices.

Seniors with disability are often excluded from community groups because of a lack of aids, inappropriate activities, the attitudes of current users, insufficient knowledge and experience of staff/volunteers, and transport issues. This was particularly so for people with long-term disability who have grown old, as opposed to those who had developed a disability as a result of ageing.

Lack of post-employment support has also been found to be a major issue for disabled people in supported employment who retire, often triggering depression and deterioration in health.

Alzheimer's Australia WA has been making progress in raising awareness and understanding of people with dementia, and has plans to make WA a dementia-friendly state. Dementia sufferers face issues of exclusion in many different ways – for example patterned carpet, large tracts of glass and stairs can be confusing and prohibit a person with dementia from attending an event or facility.

Employment, training and volunteering

According to the Framework, an age-friendly society should devise strategies to encourage mature age employment and lifelong learning and training opportunities, and create opportunities for older people to contribute through volunteering.

The Productivity Commission reports that labour force participation falls significantly as people reach 55 and is negligible for those over 70. Even though the labour force participation rate of every working age group is projected to grow in the next 40 years, the participation rate overall will decline because of the higher numbers of people moving into retirement. WA's workforce participation rate is predicted to decline to 56.3 per cent by 2051, a reduction of 12 percentage points in the 40 years from 2011.

There are compelling reasons for older people to participate in the workforce, not least the benefits to physical and mental health (assuming they are in work that they enjoy and is suitable). Statistics suggest that many mature-aged people, too late to benefit from compulsory superannuation, want to participate more.

However, discrimination on the basis of age is a major barrier to participation. According to a Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) report, there are a number of negative stereotypes associated with older job-seekers, including a propensity for more injuries, being more susceptible to chronic illness, lacking capacity for training and using new technologies, and being less productive. Evidence suggests that there is either no substance to these beliefs, or that they are minor obstacles easily overcome by appropriate training or modifications to workplace design or working conditions.

As outlined in its main workforce participation strategy document, *Skilling WA*, the WA Government proposed to address the participation of under-represented groups (including mature-aged) in the workforce by encouraging industry and the public sector to promote and facilitate their participation, with the State Government providing best practice examples of workplace flexibility.

While the DTWD was vague about formal initiatives to encourage employers to show leadership in employing older people, it said that data showed that there were a greater number of older workers employed now than five or ten years ago.

The Committee agrees that local government and the private sector adopt the WA Public Sector Commission's *A Guide to Managing an Ageing Workforce: Maximising the experience of mature-age workers through modern employment practices*, which sets out in detail the steps that need to be taken by a government agency to be regarded as age-inclusive.

Although the DTWD does not see any need to provide an employment service targeted at older people, the Committee believes that the challenges for older job-seekers are different from other job-seekers and such a service is warranted.

The DTWD has acknowledged that an award to recognise employers who embrace older workers would be a worthwhile initiative.

One of the problems facing older workers who have been retrenched is that the skills they had are no longer required. But this does not mean that they are not capable of learning new skills. The DTWD recognises the importance of retraining and re-skilling, and for some, the *Future Skills* training subsidies will be an option. *Future Skills* is the State Government's new way of prioritising training according to industry need by offering subsidies for eligible students taking up a priority course.

However, the emphasis on vocational training for priority industries will exclude many seniors, who may need to look to other providers to improve generic skills, such as computer and technology literacy. Computer literacy is becoming essential for seniors to be able to navigate their way around everyday services, and also offers many social benefits. COTA WA provides technology skills courses for seniors, and many local governments through their libraries also provide computer training for seniors. However another suggestion is that employment agencies provide more of these services.

As the population ages, there will be more demand for informal support for older adults, and, potentially, a greater supply of older volunteers. Volunteering is not exclusive to older people, however, almost a third of people aged 65 or more perform volunteer work in WA. Estimating the monetary value to the economy of volunteers is notoriously difficult, but one study suggests that it is worth more to the nation than the mining industry.

Although there is a body of recent research on volunteering in general, there seems to be little investigation of the particular needs and challenges of older volunteers. COTA WA notes that if transport-related concessions for seniors were to disappear, the capacity of seniors to participate in volunteer activities would be impacted. This would

have knock-on effects for health and well-being, given the role of volunteer participation in reducing social isolation.

The DLGC has released a number of guidelines (including *Vital Volunteering 2011-2016*) and says it has worked closely with Volunteering WA (the key support service for volunteering in WA) to ensure there are appropriate opportunities for seniors in volunteering.

Research has found that there is often a mismatch between the work volunteers want to do and how non-profit organisations engage volunteers; hence, volunteers become discouraged. According to US organisations, one way to address this was to recruit “empowered teams” – multi-skilled groups of 55-plus volunteers who were sponsored by an agency but became self-directing. WA could consider a similar strategy to ensure that retirees in WA do not become an under-utilised resource.

The Framework makes reference to the fact that as people age, concerns about economic security, personal safety and support in times of need can intensify. A strategic approach that ensures the protection and the security of older adults and simultaneously encourages “good planning and self-reliance” is an important attribute of an age-friendly community.

The Framework notes the importance of concessions and subsidies in the lives of many older Western Australians. However, the Committee heard that WA lacks an overall strategic concessions policy framework. There were anomalies in the current suite of concessions that needed to be addressed, and the application processes varied widely and were complicated. Eligibility criteria for receiving the WA Seniors’ Card also needed to be reviewed. COTA WA said the current concessions framework was inequitable, inefficient, poorly targeted and unsustainable, and was concerned that seniors’ views would not be represented in a government review.

New eligibility criteria for the *Safety and Security Rebate Scheme* (SSRS) have made it more difficult for seniors to qualify. Seniors Card holders can now only claim a rebate of up to \$200 to upgrade or replace home safety measures if they have previously received the security rebate and then experienced a break-in. As at June 2014, eight applications had been received and only four had been approved since January 2014.

The government has shifted its focus to personal safety devices, with a \$200 rebate available to Seniors Card holders for devices such as intercom monitors and fall detectors. There had been more than 2000 applications for the personal security device rebate for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2014.

The Framework promotes the use of legal instruments (such as enduring powers of attorney, enduring powers of guardianship, advance health directives and wills) to

assist Western Australians to plan for the possibility that they may not be capable of making reasoned decisions in their own best interests.

As of June 2014, the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) was guardian of last resort for 1218 people. Around one-fifth were aged 80 years and older. Of these, 85 per cent attributed their primary decision-making disability to dementia.

The OPA also investigates allegations of elder abuse. The Committee notes that since the publication of the Framework in 2012, awareness of elder abuse has advanced somewhat. However, there is still work to be done. A culture of secrecy shrouds elder abuse, partly due to the fact that the abuser is often a family member.

The DLGC has funded the *Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: Western Australia* (APEA:WA) to develop the *Elder Abuse Protocol: Guidelines for Action*. APEA:WA estimates that between two and five per cent of older people experience elder abuse, which equates to an estimated 6000 to 15,000 people.

Estimating the extent of elder abuse is difficult due to inconsistency in definitions between organisations. Agencies need to work together to create a uniform definition which will assist in collecting accurate data.

The OPA says that a significant proportion of the applications made to the State Administrative Tribunal by the OPA pertain to allegations of financial abuse. Suspicions of elder abuse arose in 125 of the OPA's 925 investigations, with 58 per cent related to financial abuse.

Gaps in financial literacy skills have made some older people susceptible to fraud or other types of financial abuse, according to COTA WA, but it was difficult to source independent financial advice.

Communication, information and technology

A number of issues relevant to seniors were not covered in the Framework at all or were not adequately addressed, including ways in which information should be provided to seniors. Good communication and information are essential to seniors during a period of transition, and not knowing how to locate needed information can be an impediment to an older person making a well-informed decision. Receiving the right amount of information in an appropriate format is critical. Hence, information should be offered in a range of formats.

A common complaint from older people is that auditory information is spoken too quickly and unfamiliar terms and jargon are used. The Committee believes it would be helpful if the State Government developed guidelines on use of language in government publications aimed at seniors.

Experience in using modern technology, including computers and the internet, also needs to be taken into consideration. For older adults who do not use computers, the online-world can lead to increased feelings of exclusion. The trend towards the digitisation of documentation and services exacerbates such feelings.

On the other hand, technology can present significant opportunities for greater participation and involvement of seniors in community life. Online services can lead to greater independence while living at home – by facilitating online shopping and bill payment, for example – and keep people in touch with family members. There is a healthy appetite for computer literacy among the WA seniors population, with learning programs often fully booked. The *First Click* and *Second Click* programs for learning computer skills, which have been discontinued, are sorely missed.

Government departments are supposed to comply with internationally recognised website accessibility guidelines for making web content more accessible to people with disabilities. Since 2012, three website accessibility surveys have been conducted to identify progress and highlight issues with implementation. The surveys found that only about a third (36%) of new websites are compliant. The Department of Finance, which monitors website accessibility compliance, said that budgetary constraints and a lack of appropriate skills were a challenge to implementation.

Grandparents caring for grandchildren

One group that is apparently finding it difficult to access information is grandparents caring for grandchildren, often referred to as grandcarers. Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People Jenni Perkins said that grandparents were clearly identifying the need for additional support and access to counselling or information, but did not know where to go or were not aware of what supports might be available.

Carers WA said that while a considerable amount of information was available online, not all carers had access to the internet or the time to navigate between multiple agencies. Many may not have the confidence to navigate social, legal and education systems that were different to those in place when they raised their own children.

Children in kinship care often had complex needs and grandparents moving into a primary care role were introduced to a complex array of issues involving an equally complex array of services and agencies. Support for grandcarers from different agencies needs to be better co-ordinated.

Aboriginal children and young people are 15 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal children and young people, and nearly 70 per cent are placed with relatives. Research has shown an increased willingness of Aboriginal families to care for children who have been removed from their parents.

Ageing issues in Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal elders play a key role in providing care to family members in their communities, but are not revered in the way they once were. Aboriginal ageing issues have been largely neglected, according to COTA WA, possibly because there are fewer elderly Aboriginal people. While in the non-Indigenous population, people aged 50 and over represent 31 per cent of the total population, Indigenous people aged 50 and over account for only 12 per cent of the total Indigenous population.

Rates of disability and caring are high in Aboriginal communities, but provision of services is not always straightforward, however. Whilst recognising that they need to cater to the cultural, ethnic or religious diversity of their clients, many service providers did not understand the diversity within each group. New models of care that are culturally appropriate need to be developed in consultation with Aboriginal communities.

The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework mentions the Federal *Closing the Gap* initiative to address health outcomes for Aboriginal people, but does not outline any specific programs for addressing their particular needs.

The Framework is, in the opinion of many of the organisations and individuals who provided evidence to this Inquiry, a well-meaning document which nevertheless lacks the detail that would actually assist agencies and organisations to create age-friendly communities.

Effectiveness of the Framework

Chapter Four assesses the effectiveness of the Framework and the role of the DLGC in overseeing its implementation. The Committee believes the department has demonstrated a profound lack of leadership in terms of co-ordinating government agencies, organisations and resources to build an age-friendly state.

Collaboration between relevant government departments has been haphazard and inadequate, with the actual implementation of age-friendly practices largely left to local governments with insufficient resources. While some local governments have made significant progress in developing an age-friendly community, the department seems unsure about what has actually been achieved at the local government level generally.

The DLGC provided community research grants to 27 local governments to research the needs of seniors in their community, but the extent to which this has translated into on-the-ground age-friendly initiatives is unclear. There is no mechanism to ensure that local governments comply with the age-friendly community approach endorsed by the DLGC.

WALGA said funding for pilot programs was welcome, but it was the implementation of the programs that counted and funding was not provided for this.

While the DLGC collaborates with a number of government agencies in the administration of issues related to seniors, the coordination and oversight of the range of the diverse interests of seniors has been poorly managed. A Senior Officers Group for government agencies to discuss seniors' issues (convened by the DLGC) has only met twice in the past year and does not include some key agencies.

There was a suggestion from a number of witnesses that the DLGC did not have enough staff dedicated to seniors' interests.

While some State Government agencies and non-government organisations had found the Framework useful in providing a strategic vision, it was criticised for not providing sufficient direction on policies and practices. There was also no method of assessing progress against initiatives identified in the Framework. As such, the Committee welcomes news that the DLGC will consider the application of benchmark indicators for the effectiveness of age-friendly communities currently being developed by the WHO.

The inclusion of an Age-friendly Communities and Local Government Award and an Age-friendly Organisation Award in the annual WA Seniors Awards is a step in the right direction in encouraging age-friendliness. However, many government agencies and local governments are still only at the stage of identifying age-friendly policy challenges and need further encouragement. Funding and leadership from the State Government and the DLGC in particular is urgently required.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1

Page 43

Not enough has been done to address the disproportionately high rate of dementia in the Aboriginal population.

Recommendation 1

Page 43

The State Government should increase funding to Alzheimer's Australia WA to promote dementia awareness, research and provide services in Aboriginal communities.

Finding 2

Page 44

There is insufficient data and research on the impact (or incidence/extent/implications) of dementia in Western Australia to ensure an effective response.

Recommendation 2

Page 45

Given that the number of people suffering dementia is expected to increase significantly, the Department of Health should invest in gathering robust data on the nature of dementia in Western Australia so that services can be targeted effectively.

Recommendation 3

Page 47

The Minister for Community Services should introduce amendments to the *Carers Recognition Act* (2004) to ensure that the role of carers in home care settings is given due recognition and respect.

Finding 3

Page 51

The State and Commonwealth governments provide a wide range of services and programs targeted at the health and care needs of older West Australians, however the subacute care sector is under-resourced.

Recommendation 4

Page 53

Given the success of programs such as Exergaming in motivating sedentary seniors, the Department of Sport and Recreation should ensure seniors in all communities can benefit by expanding funding for training to community groups, enabling them to run the programs locally.

Recommendation 5

Page 54

The success of the Living Longer Living Stronger program warrants an increase in resources and funding from the Department of Health to ensure that it remains a stand-alone program.

Recommendation 6 **Page 56**

The Department of Health to ensure that the Stay on Your Feet program is retained as a stand-alone program and properly resourced into the future.

Finding 4 **Page 58**

There is not enough research into the use and misuse of alcohol and drugs by older people, including the unintentional misuse of prescription medication.

Recommendation 7 **Page 58**

Given its serious impact on the health of older people, the State Government should investigate initiatives to address excessive alcohol and drug consumption in older age.

Finding 5 **Page 61**

There are not enough palliative care services, particularly in Aboriginal communities. Moreover, these services are not accessed in a timely fashion, partly due to lack of awareness.

Recommendation 8 **Page 61**

Further research is conducted to gain a greater understanding of the palliative care needs of Aboriginal people and the delivery of those services to, Aboriginal communities.

Finding 6 **Page 67**

The aged care workforce, including nurses, geriatricians and residential and community aged care staff, will struggle to meet demand – in terms of numbers and diversity – as the population ages.

Recommendation 9 **Page 67**

The State Government needs to actively plan for the increasing demand for aged care professionals.

Finding 7 **Page 74**

The withdrawal of regional bus services which connect to the Australind train service from Bunbury to Perth has resulted in seniors driving to Perth instead of taking the train.

Recommendation 10	Page 74
The Department of Transport should ensure that public transport is a viable alternative to driving to Perth for country aged pensioners by reinstating bus services which connect to the Australind train service in the Bunbury region.	
Finding 8	Page 77
Shelters at bus stops are an essential amenity for older users of public transport, but the number of bus stops with shelters in the metropolitan area is unacceptably low.	
Finding 9	Page 80
There is a lack of conclusive research indicating whether (and when) seniors feel safe using public transport.	
Recommendation 11	Page 80
In order to ensure that services are perceived as safe by seniors, the Public Transport Authority should undertake a detailed study of the public transport use and needs of seniors and their perceptions of safety.	
Finding 10	Page 80
The fact that train station car parks are full well before 9am means that many seniors are unable to take advantage of the free public transport offered to seniors after 9am.	
Recommendation 12	Page 81
The Department of Transport should investigate ways to make train station car bays available for use by seniors after 9am.	
Recommendation 13	Page 82
The Department of Regional Development should adjust the monetary value of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card to align with the geographic location of the person to whom it is issued. Pensioners who need to travel long distances should receive a greater contribution towards fuel costs than those who only need to travel short distances.	
Recommendation 14	Page 82
The Department of Transport should publish the number of successful prosecutions of Taxi Users' Subsidy Scheme fraud in its annual report.	
Finding 11	Page 83
There is limited support in Western Australia for people making the transition from driving.	

Recommendation 15 **Page 83**

Given that transition from driving is identified in the Framework as something that will help create an age-friendly community, the State Government should establish a driving cessation program similar to the UQDRIVE model.

Recommendation 16 **Page 83**

The Department of Transport should review the criteria needed to obtain a Photo Card to make it more accessible for seniors.

Finding 12 **Page 89**

An increasing number of seniors are feeling concerned about security of tenure.

Recommendation 17 **Page 89**

As a matter of urgency, the Department of Housing and Department of Commerce considers the recommendations of the report *Security of tenure for the ageing population in Western Australia*.

Finding 13 **Page 90**

While some progress has been made on the provision of housing that is more suited to seniors, there remains an under-supply of social housing for aged pensioners on low incomes.

Recommendation 18 **Page 90**

The Department of Housing should urgently address the lack of affordable housing for seniors on low incomes by increasing the supply of social housing.

Finding 14 **Page 92**

The incidence of first-time homelessness is increasing amongst the elderly, with older women particularly vulnerable due to a lack of opportunity to accumulate financial and material assets.

Finding 15 **Page 94**

There is a lack of suitable seniors housing in the inner metropolitan area.

Finding 16 **Page 96**

The State Government has failed to take action on reducing stamp duty for aged pensioners who downsize their homes.

Recommendation 19 **Page 97**

The State Government should implement a stamp duty concession or exemption for seniors who wish to purchase a smaller home.

Recommendation 20 **Page 98**

Government tenders for new buildings, including social housing, should specify compliance with universal design principles.

Finding 17 **Page 103**

Implementation of the *Liveable Neighbourhoods* guidelines has been hindered by lack of transport infrastructure and inconsistencies between State and local government planning schemes.

Finding 18 **Page 105**

Local anecdotal evidence and research from the UK suggests that the time allowed to cross the road at signalled pedestrian crossing is insufficient for most people aged 65 or more.

Recommendation 21 **Page 105**

The Department of Transport should increase the time allowed to cross the road for seniors at signalled crossings in areas where there is a higher density of seniors.

Recommendation 22 **Page 108**

Main Roads should:

- develop a system for identifying the most unsafe street crossings for seniors; and
- trial the Singapore model of activating extra crossing time with a seniors' card.

Recommendation 23 **Page 114**

Under its new policing model, WA Police should make local teams available to perform an audit of security concerns, needs and vulnerabilities in their local areas with a view to working closely with seniors to address the issues.

Finding 19 **Page 120**

The demand on local governments to provide affordable, accessible and innovative ways to engage seniors and address issues of social isolation will escalate as the ageing population grows.

Finding 20 **Page 120**

There are few programs to help older people deal with the life transitions which are known catalysts for social isolation.

Recommendation 24 **Page 120**

The Department of Local Government and Communities should include information on the link between life transitions and social isolation in the *Stay connected and be involved* booklet, and ensure there are programs available to address this issue.

Finding 21**Page 122**

Many older people do not feel they are treated with respect and understanding and there are very few initiatives to address this.

Recommendation 25**Page 122**

The Department of Local Government and Communities should provide training programs or develop a training toolkit to assist public and private sector organisations to treat older people with respect and understanding. In addition, an advertising campaign promoting the capabilities of older people should be developed.

Recommendation 26**Page 123**

The Department of Local Government and Communities establishes a Seniors Report Card to measure changes in attitudes towards seniors.

Finding 22**Page 126**

There are not enough culturally appropriate aged care or seniors services to meet the needs of older people from CaLD backgrounds.

Finding 23**Page 128**

Older people whose sexual orientation or gender identity is not heterosexual face discrimination in aged care facilities and exclusion from mainstream seniors' groups.

Finding 24**Page 130**

Older people with disability who had been employed struggle with the transition from work to retirement.

Finding 25**Page 131**

Older people with disability are often excluded from mainstream seniors' groups.

Recommendation 27**Page 131**

Older people with disability must be considered in policies and programs which target inclusion.

Finding 26**Page 139**

Discrimination against workers on the basis of age persists but the State Government has done little to address this.

Recommendation 28**Page 139**

The guide and assessment tool developed to help State Government agencies become more age-inclusive should be extended to the local government and private sectors.

Recommendation 29	Page 139
An employment agency dedicated to the specific needs of older workers should be established.	
Recommendation 30	Page 139
The Department of Training and Workforce Development should establish an annual award to recognise age-friendly employers.	
Finding 27	Page 142
Training and reskilling will be required for the increasing number of older workers whose skills have become obsolete or who need to move into a less physically demanding field of work.	
Recommendation 31	Page 142
The Department of Training and Workforce Development should ensure that older workers have access to subsidised training in all industries – not just priority industries, as is the requirement subsidies under the <i>Future Skills</i> program.	
Finding 28	Page 150
The approach to concessions for seniors is poorly planned and controlled.	
Recommendation 32	Page 150
The State Government needs to design a concessions policy and framework that will ensure concessions for seniors target the people most in need.	
Finding 29	Page 153
Seniors are finding it difficult to meet the new criteria to qualify for the Safety and Security Rebate Scheme.	
Finding 30	Page 160
Approaches to tackling elder abuse in WA are hampered by a lack of reliable data on the extent of abuse.	
Recommendation 33	Page 160
The State Government must support the Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse WA to work more intensely with community and government bodies to establish reliable statistics on the extent of elder abuse.	
Recommendation 34	Page 160
WA Police should train officers in ways to recognise signs of elder abuse and ways to successfully prosecute perpetrators.	

Recommendation 35	Page 168
The State Government should develop guidelines on appropriate language for use in government publications aimed at seniors.	
Finding 31	Page 175
While many seniors have embraced computer technology, some are being left behind and will be disadvantaged by the inability to access online information.	
Recommendation 36	Page 175
The State Government needs to ensure ongoing access to free one-on-one computer and internet training for seniors.	
Finding 32	Page 181
There is not enough statistical information about grandparents caring full-time for grandchildren to properly address the needs of this group.	
Finding 33	Page 181
The needs of grandcarers are often complex and support is difficult to access.	
Recommendation 37	Page 181
Support for grandcarers from different government agencies should be better co-ordinated.	
Recommendation 38	Page 185
Given the diverse needs of the ageing Aboriginal population, the Minister for Seniors formulates a mechanism to consult directly with Aboriginal elders to hear concerns firsthand and determine needs.	
Recommendation 39	Page 185
The State Government conducts an audit of the methods used in consulting older people in Aboriginal communities.	
Finding 34	Page 191
The Department of Local Government and Communities has no system of monitoring the age-friendly status or progress of local governments.	
Finding 35	Page 191
Since 2011, no State Government funding has been made available to local governments to conduct community engagement research to determine the needs of seniors.	

Finding 36**Page 192**

No State Government funding is made available to local governments to implement age-friendly initiatives proposed by the Seniors Strategic Planning Framework.

Finding 37**Page 192**

There has been no State Government financial support to assist local governments to implement age-friendly practices or initiatives identified by community consultation research as being essential or helpful to the wellbeing of seniors.

Recommendation 40**Page 192**

The Department of Local Government and Communities provides an incentive for local governments to implement age-friendly practices by linking funding to implementation.

Finding 38**Page 194**

While endorsed by the Department of Local Government and Communities and WALGA, there is nothing to compel local governments to adopt the Age-Friendly Communities framework.

Finding 39**Page 194****Recommendation 41****Page 194**

To demonstrate that it takes seniors seriously, the State Government should allocate more financial and human resources to the Department of Local Government and Communities and reinstate a dedicated unit for seniors' interests.

Finding 40**Page 196**

Collaboration between State Government departments in relation to planning for ageing and seniors issues is inadequate. This demonstrates a lack of responsibility on the part of the Department of Local Government and Communities.

Recommendation 42**Page 196**

The State Government should investigate models for a formal collaborative agreement between key government departments to ensure that they have a co-ordinated approach to ageing policy, planning and implementation.

Recommendation 43**Page 196**

The State Government should appoint a separate Minister for Ageing who would be responsible for issues affecting both the well-aged (currently the responsibility of the Minister for Seniors and Volunteering) and the frail aged (currently the responsibility of the Minister for Health).

Recommendation 44**Page 197**

The Department of Local Government and Communities should investigate opportunities and provide support for collaborative research with the university sector.

Finding 41**Page 199**

While the Department of Local Government and Communities has said it will consider the forthcoming World Health Organisation effectiveness indicators for use by local governments, there is currently no system in place for local governments to monitor the age-friendly implementation.

Recommendation 45**Page 199**

The Department of Local Government and Communities should adopt the World Health Organisation effectiveness indicators or a similar system as soon as possible, to enable local governments to monitor implementation of age-friendly initiatives.

Finding 42**Page 202**

The Department of Local Government and Communities has demonstrated a profound lack of leadership in co-ordinating the implementation of the Seniors Strategic Planning Framework at the state and local government levels.