



Lake Macquarie
CITY COUNCIL

Ageing Population Strategy 2014 – 2017

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AM	Asset Management (LMCC)
AS	Australian Standard
CIV	Civilake (LMCC)
COM	Communications (LMCC)
CP	Community Planning (LMCC)
CSC	Customer Service Centre (LMCC)
CS	Cultural Services (LMCC)
DAC	Development Assessment and Compliance Department (LMCC)
DAP	Disability Action Plan (LMCC)
DCP	Development Control Plan (LMCC)
DOHA	Department of Health and Ageing
EDB	Economic Development Board (LMCC)
FIN	Finance (LMCC)
HR	Human Resources (LMCC)
IP	Integrated Planning (LMCC)
IPART	Independent Pricing and regulatory Tribunal
IT	Information Technology Department (LMCC)
LGA	Local Government Area
LS	Leisure Services (LMCC)
MOW	Meals on Wheels
PROP	Property (LMCC)
RAPP	Resource for Ageing Population Planning
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SEPP	State Environment Planning Policy
TBA	To be advised
VIC	Visitor Information Centre (LMCC)
WER	Waste Environment Rangers (LMCC)
WHS	Work Health and Safety

1. Introduction

Background

In 2008, Council endorsed the Ageing Population Plan 2008-17. The aim of this plan was to identify the impacts of an ageing population on the local area and to provide a framework for a response by Council and other stakeholders.

Councils play a significant role in the provision of services for older people and in the support of other providers. As strategic planner, service provider, regulator and manager of the built and natural environments at a local level, councils have a substantial impact on the quality of life of older people and their participation in the local community.

As there has been significant changes to financial and aged care systems, this strategy reports progress to date, and identifies a work program for the period 2014-17. Some longer term issues that will need to be considered in future plans are included in the Appendix 2.

The City of Lake Macquarie

The Lake Macquarie Local Government Area (LGA) is the fourth most populous city in New South Wales and is located on the east coast, 160 km north of Sydney. The LGA covers approximately 750 km², of which 110 km² is lake. The lake geographically divides the city. The eastern side of the lake consists of more densely populated older urban areas, whereas the western side comprises scattered communities, some of which are semi-rural and isolated. The northern area of the LGA is a mix of densely populated older suburbs, some new development areas, and small townships.

The 2011 Census found the population of the City of Lake Macquarie to be 189,005¹. It is the largest city in the Lower Hunter accounting for 36.3% of this area's population².

The median age of the LGA's population is 41 years, compared to the NSW median of 38 years. The following table shows the break down of major age groups within the LGA.

Age Groups	No	%
0-4 yrs	11,293	6%
5-14 yrs	23,881	13%
15-24 yrs	23,789	13%
25-44 yrs	43,923	23%
45-64 yrs	51,274	27%
65 years and over	34,846	18%
Total population	189,005	100%

¹ ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

² Ibid

Population characteristics³ include

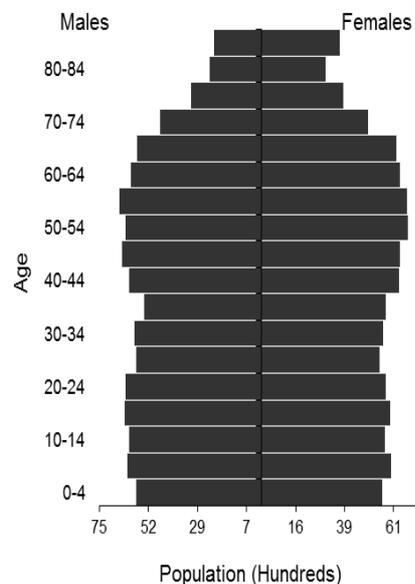
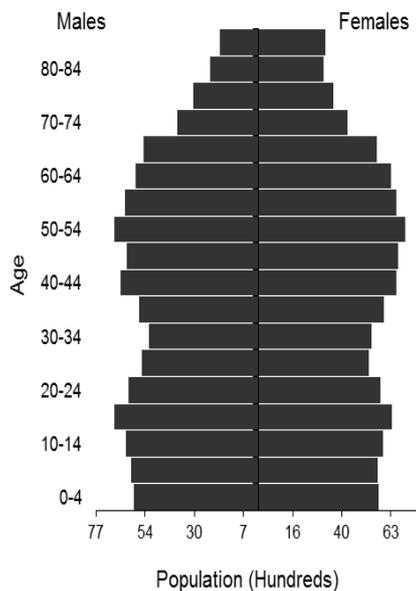
- Lake Macquarie has an older population than the NSW average, with the area experiencing a “premature ageing” of its population. 34,846 people are aged 65 years and over, this is 18.3% of the LGA’s population.
- 24,953 people are aged 55-64 years, this is 13.2% of the LGA’s population.
- 11,572 people reported needing assistance with core activities, this is 6% of the LGA’s population.
- 20,382 people provided assistance to people with a disability aged over 15 years, this is 13% of the LGA’s population.
- The median level of personal weekly income for the LGA was \$520 per week compared to the NSW median of \$561 per week.

The population of Lake Macquarie is expected to grow to 198,346 by 2016; 200,667 by 2021; and 20,2573 by 2026⁴.

Lake Macquarie Age Structure

2012

2016



³ ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

⁴ Resource for Ageing Population Planning 2.0 (RAPP 2.0)

Country of birth

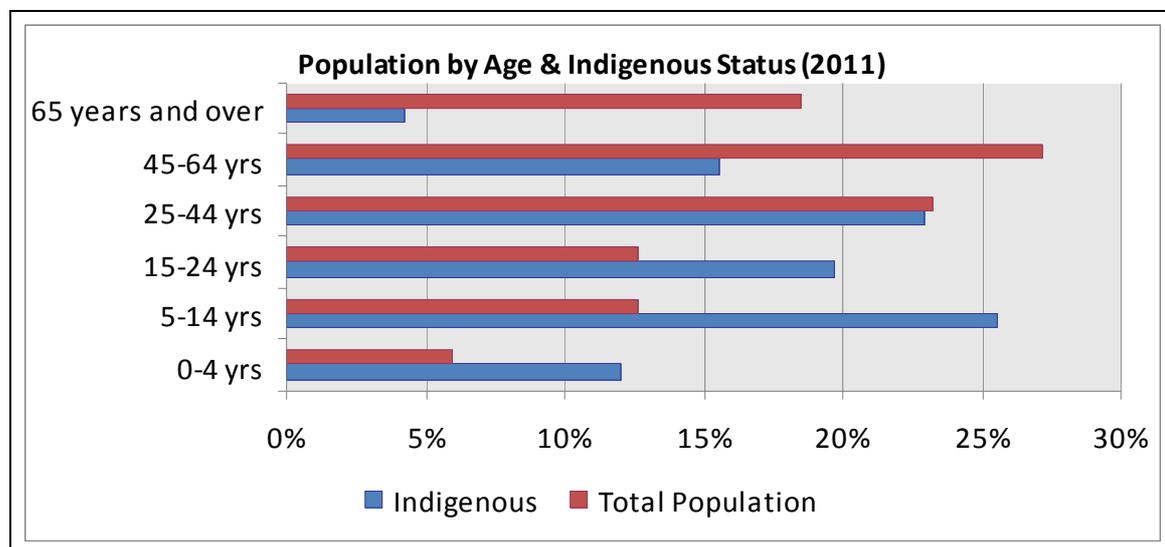
87% of the Lake Macquarie population is of an English speaking background and 6.3% come from a language other than English background⁵. The following table shows country of birth for people of all ages.

All Lake Macquarie LOTE Background 2011	Persons
Bosnia and Herzegovina	126
Cambodia	78
China	890
Croatia	292
Egypt	164
Macedonia	798
Germany	1553
Greece	349
Hong Kong	257
India	1077
Indonesia	259
Iraq	55
Italy	943
Japan	138
South Korea	370
Lebanon	82
Malaysia	589
Malta	275
Netherlands	942
Philippines	1130
Poland	505
Singapore	135
South Eastern Europe	279
Sri Lanka	272
Thailand	270
Turkey	83
Vietnam	161
Total	12072
Country of birth not stated	12622

⁵ ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

Indigenous Population

Lake Macquarie has an indigenous population of 5,595 people with 872 people in the 45-64 age group, and 238 people aged 65 years and over. The median age is 20 years and 20% of the indigenous population is aged 45 years and over.⁶



Aims of this Plan

This Plan aims to:

- Update the Lake Macquarie Ageing Population Plan 2008-17;
- Identify priority actions for Council that will assist in meeting the needs of the ageing population, and to integrate these actions into Council's strategic plans;
- Outline a work program that ensures continuous improvement in the provision of services and facilities for the City's older residents.

Methodology and structure of the Plan

The process used to develop this Plan includes:

- Analysis of demographic information and statistical data relevant to services for older people;
- Review of legislation, standards, and issues related to older people;
- Review of Council's current levels of service and infrastructure provision;
- Review of the Lake Macquarie Ageing Population Plan 2008-17 (Appendix 1);
- Ongoing consultation with the Lake Macquarie Ageing and Disability Panel, seniors and organisations providing services to older people;
- Establishment of priorities;
- Public exhibition of a draft plan for feedback; and
- Endorsement of a final plan by Council.

⁶ ABS Census of Population and Ageing 2011

The Plan consists of:

- An introduction to the City of Lake Macquarie, and the Plan format;
- Information on trends in the ageing of the population;
- Information on service provision for older people;
- Information on the relevant legislative and regulative framework;
- Information on priority issues, and an action plan for Council's planning and operational strategies for 2014-17 to improve access to services for older people.
- A list of longer term strategies that will need to be considered in future plans.

2. Ageing

Who is an older person?

The Commonwealth Government classifies people aged 65 years and over as an older person and this is the age that has been used to calculate its aged care reforms. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are considered eligible for aged care at age 50 due to their lower life expectancy⁷.

Who is a senior?

There are varying definitions for seniors. In NSW, to be eligible for a Seniors Card, permanent residents need to be aged 60 years or more and not working more than 20 hours per week. Various commercial and community programs however, consider people over the age of 55 years as seniors in order to qualify for discounts on goods and services, and membership of clubs/associations.

This Plan mainly focuses on older people but does acknowledge that the “baby boomers”⁸ who are now seniors, will have some impact on the future development of services and infrastructure.

Disability in ageing

The Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers was undertaken in 2012. This Australia wide survey⁹ identified that:

- 18.5% of the population reported that they had a disability, and a further 21% had a long term health condition that did not restrict their everyday activities.
- 88% of the people with a disability had a specific limitation or restriction in carrying out everyday activities.
- People with a disability aged between 15-64 years have both lower participation (53%) and higher unemployment rates (9.4%) than people without a disability (83% and 4.9% respectively).
- The rate of disability increases with age, with 1:20 children (aged 5 years and under) having a disability, compared to 9:10 people aged 90 years and over.
- Of all people with a disability, 81% reported their main disability as a physical disability and 19% reported their main disability as a mental health or behavioural condition. Whilst 93% of older people with a disability (65 years and over) reported their main disability as a physical disability and only 7% reported their main disability as a mental health or behavioural condition.
- 90% of older people lived in a private dwelling, with 71% of these living with others. However, of those aged 80 years or more only 77% of people lived in private dwellings, and only 58% lived with others.
- 87% of older people reported having a long term health condition. The most frequently reported as problems were arthritis 16%, hypertension 11%, and back problems 9.4%.
- 42% of older people needed assistance with at least one everyday activity because of disability or age.

⁷ DOHA Living Longer Living Better

⁸ “Baby boomers” are people born in the period 1946 -1964

⁹ ABS Survey of Ageing Disability and Carers 2012

- Older people reported needing assistance with personal activities 29%, healthcare 25%, mobility 18%, property maintenance 23%, and household tasks 18%.
- 11.9% of the Australian population identified as carers; 29% of these were primary carers; 33% of primary carers had a disability themselves.
- 1:5 carers were aged between 55 and 64 years.

Legislation and regulations

The 2011 Productivity Commission report¹⁰ identified the need to recognize changing community expectations, and the limitations of the current aged care system that focuses heavily on care in residential aged care facilities. This report recommends a greater investment in community care where older people are allowed to age in place in their own homes. The Living Longer Living Better reform program introduced in 2012, and changes to the Aged Care Act in 2013,¹¹ have implemented these recommendations.

A greater emphasis on older people ageing in place in their own homes has a significant impact on local government. Particular areas affected include:

- planning and regulation of land use and development – requiring changes to Council's LEP and DCP particularly in relation to seniors' housing and the design of streetscape and town centres;
- provision of and maintenance of infrastructure – particularly pedestrian infrastructure, bus stops, public toilets, community and recreation facilities;
- service provision – including waste services, library services, information, social and recreational activities.

¹⁰ *Caring for Older Australians 2011*

¹¹ <http://www.livinglongerlivingbetter.gov.au>

3. Ageing in Lake Macquarie

The spread of ageing in Lake Macquarie

In 2011, the City of Lake Macquarie's population included 34,846 people aged 65 years and over, and 24,953 people aged 55-64 years. The following table demonstrates the spread of senior residents as reported in the ABS Census 2011 by Statistical Local Areas¹².

Senior Population of Lake Macquarie by 2011 Census Statistical Areas

Age Group	East	North	West	Total City
55-59 years	4,203	4,810	3,646	12,659
60-64 years	4,086	4,484	3,722	12,292
65-69 years	3,462	3,478	3,277	10,217
70-74 years	2,690	2,699	2,528	7,917
75-79 years	2,208	2,287	2,022	6,517
80-84 years	1,773	1,883	1,723	5,379
85 + years	1,502	1,594	1,721	4,817
Total Senior Population	19,924	21,235	18,639	59,798

Comparative information

Lake Macquarie with a median age of 41 years, has a higher percentage of older persons and seniors than Australia or NSW¹³.

Age	Lake Macquarie	NSW	Australia
65 + years	18.3%	14.7%	14.0%
55-64 years	13.2%	11.7%	11.6%

Our neighbour, Newcastle had a median age of 37 years, and is closer to the NSW averages of people aged 65 + years at 15%, and people aged 55-64 years at 11.4%.

¹² ABS *Census of Population and Housing 2011*

¹³ *Ibid*

Weekly income of older people

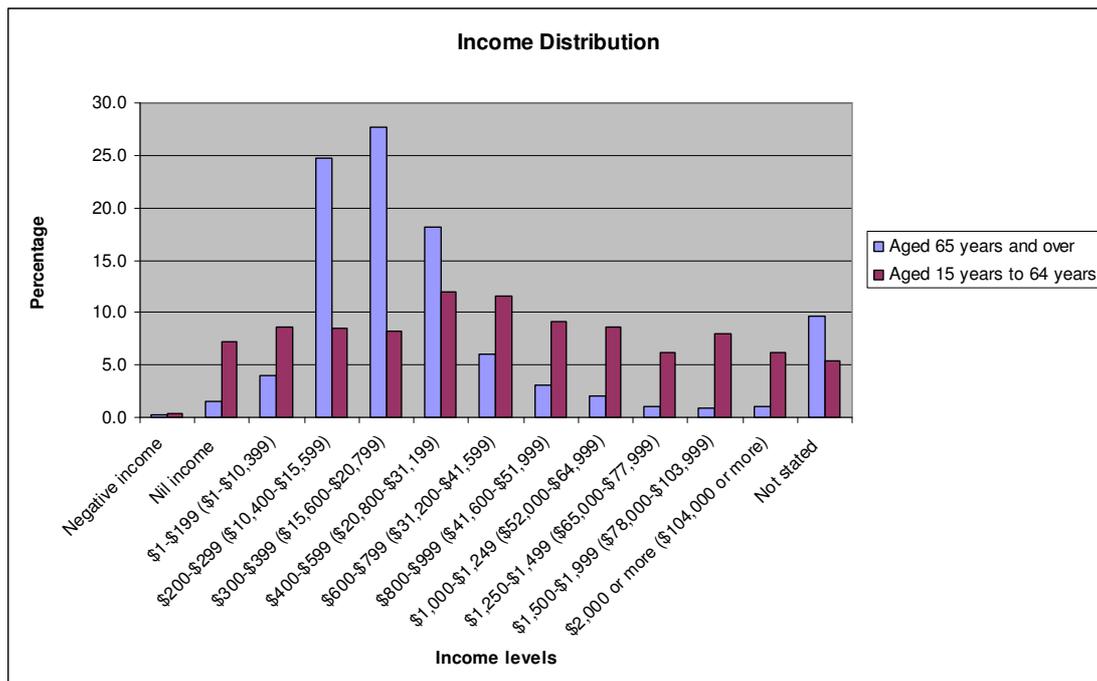
In 2011, the income levels for the majority of people aged 65 years and over living in Lake Macquarie fell within four main groups.

- 16% had an income under \$199 per week
- 24.7% had an income of \$200-\$299 per week
- 27.7% had an income of \$300-\$399 per week
- 18.1% had an income of \$400 - \$599 per week.

The following chart demonstrates that approximately 68% of people aged 65 years and over were reliant on a weekly income of up to \$399. The poverty line for a single person at this time was \$459.83 per week, and for a couple it was \$615.12 per week¹⁴.

The current aged pension¹⁵ is equivalent to:

- \$366.85 per week for a single person
- \$276.55 per week each for a couple (combined rate \$553.10).



¹⁴ Melbourne Institute Applied Economic and Social Research September 2011

¹⁵ <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/age-pension>

Projections

Demographic projections

The most recent population projections up to 2026 and endorsed by Local Government NSW¹⁶, show a continued increase in Lake Macquarie's population aged 65 years and over, and a slight fall in the population aged 55-64 years¹⁷.

Seniors and Older People 2016-2026

Year	2016		2021		2026	
55-64 years	25,818	13.01%	25,644	12.78%	24,614	12.15%
65 + years	40,016	20.17%	44,153	22.0%	48,378	23.88%
Total population	198,346		200,667		202,573	

The Department of Health and Ageing¹⁸ has also produced population projections for LGAs. These projections vary slightly to those endorsed by Local Government NSW, with the city wide population of people aged 65 years and over increasing to 20.52% in 2016, and 22.74% in 2021. However, this planning tool also provides a guide for the three statistical local areas of the LGA that may assist Council to determine local priorities for infrastructure and services (see Information on Statistical Local Areas table on page 14).

Other relevant projections

Employment by people aged 65 years and over is projected to gradually increase from 2.8% in 2012 to 3.47% in 2026, whilst the total number of people employed is expected to decline from 90,194 people in 2012 to 87,070 in 2026.¹⁹

Total death projections are projected to rise from 1,769 in 2012, to 1,910 in 2026.²⁰

Proportion of population over 65 years that is female is projected to remain around 54% for the entire period.²¹

¹⁶ Resource for Ageing Population Planning 2.0 (RAPP 2.0)

¹⁷ Fall in 55-64 years down from 13.2% in 2011

¹⁸ Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) Statistical Local Area Projections 2007-27

¹⁹ Resource for Ageing Population Planning 2.0 (RAPP 2.0)

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

Information on Statistical Local Areas from 2011 Census²² and DOHA Projections²³

Statistical Local Area	2011		2016		2021		2026	
	SLA Population	65+ years						
East	61,038	19.04%	65,019	21.72%	65,888	24.02%	66,474	26.28%
North	75,569	15.80%	81,878	17.58%	84,872	19.07%	87,570	21.83%
West	52,400	21.51%	58,337	23.31%	60,571	25.60%	62,534	27.73%
City wide	189,007	18.78%	205,234	20.87%	211,331	22.89%	216,578	25.28%

²² ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

²³ Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) Statistical Local Area Projections 2007-27

4. Planning and Operational Strategies

Background

Ageing and Disability Panel

The Ageing and Disability Panel was established in 2010 to provide Council with advice on the broad range of issues that affect seniors, people with a disability, and carers. The Panel also has a role in providing information back into the community on Council services and plans. Issues discussed include access to services and facilities, pedestrian infrastructure, transport, health, housing, support services and activities. Panel members consist of residents from the three target groups in addition to representatives of service providers. The Panel meets bimonthly and holds two community meetings each year.

Ageing and Disability staff

Council employs two full time ageing and disability staff members, an Ageing and Disability Planner and an Ageing and Disability Support Worker. A part time Carer Resource Worker is also employed. Council currently receives two grants towards the coordination of ageing and disability projects. These annual grants total \$67,196 and are made up of \$47,062 from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, and \$20,134 from NSW Ageing and Disability. Two annual grants totaling \$36,000 and made up of \$26,729 from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, and \$9,271 from NSW Ageing and Disability are also received towards the carer resource project. Agreements are in place until June 2015 however, the Commonwealth Government is currently undertaking a review of all funding.

Non discriminatory access and use

Local government plays a major role in the design of housing and local communities and therefore, plays a significant role in the support of older people to age in place and lead active independent lives.

Access to a range of community, recreational, retail, and commercial facilities is limited for many older people and people with a disability. Universal housing design²⁴ and age friendly cities²⁵ are initiatives of the World Health Organisation that have been taken up by the Commonwealth and NSW Governments. These initiatives have also been incorporated into Council's planning for streetscapes, community facilities and recreational areas. The principles of age friendly cities relate to safe accessible pedestrian environments, ease of access to facilities and services including public transport, and a mix of housing choices and social inclusion. Universal housing design includes accessibility and adaptability features, and in Australia this is regulated through AS 4299 Adaptable Housing²⁶ and the Commonwealth Government's Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.²⁷

Housing

The ability of seniors to age in place is adversely affected by the limited availability of suitable housing options. In 2012, Council undertook a Seniors Housing Strategy that outlined the current local housing stock, models of seniors' housing available,

²⁴ <http://www.anuhd.org>

²⁵ *Age Friendly Cities: A Guide*

²⁶ *Australian Standard AS 4299 Adaptable Housing*

²⁷ *FAHCSIA Liveable Housing Design Guidelines*

the benefits and constraints of models, and planning and regulatory controls. It also provided recommendations for the future development of council policies and planning instruments related to seniors' housing.

In addition to DCP requirements for adaptable housing, seniors' housing is regulated by SEPP Housing for Older People and People with a Disability. Council's LEP also outlines requirements for the development of retirement villages,²⁸ however, the SEPP²⁹ is used as an additional tool to assess applications made under the LEP.

One of the key areas of focus for the Seniors Housing Strategy for the next three years is on increasing affordable options for seniors in the local area.

Seniors Program

The objectives of the Lake Macquarie Seniors' Program that commenced in 2008 are to:

- increase participation rates by seniors in community activities and physical activity;
- encourage seniors to be independent;
- assist seniors to make informed decisions;
- promote the health, safety and wellbeing of seniors.

This free Program allows seniors to experience the benefit of various types of gentle exercise at introductory sessions, to gain information to assist with decision making, and to stimulate the mind. Information sessions and workshops on a range of topics also promote life long learning and healthy lifestyles.

For the past three and a half years, UnitingCare Ageing has sponsored the Seniors' Program. This sponsorship enabled Council to advertise the Program monthly in local newspapers. However, due to changes in aged care funding, UnitingCare Ageing is unable to continue the sponsorship arrangement. In addition to newspaper advertising, 600 flyers are sent each month to individuals, seniors' groups, community centres, medical practitioners, and libraries.

In 2012-13, the Lake Macquarie Seniors Program offered 33 sessions that were attended by 1,756 participants. Feedback from participants attending sessions across the Program resulted in an overall satisfaction rate of 99%. The Program also involves a range of community, government, business, and charitable organisations, in addition to Council services.

Disability parking

Lake Macquarie has the second highest number of Mobility Parking Scheme Permit Holders in NSW. The area has 12,185 total permits made up of 11,894 individual permits, 123 organisation permits, and 168 temporary permits. To be eligible for an individual permit a person must have a permanent disability and meet one of the following criteria:

- Unable to walk due to the permanent or temporary loss of use of one or both legs or other permanent medical or physical condition.
- Has a physical condition that detrimentally affects their mobility as a result of walking 100 metres.

²⁸ LMCC Local Environment Plan , clause 41

²⁹ SEPP Housing for Seniors and People with a Disability

- Requires the use of crutches, a walking frame, callipers, scooter, wheelchair or other similar mobility aid.
- Assessed as permanently blind.

Temporary permits are available to people with a disability who meet the above criteria for up to six months. Service providers for frail aged people or people with a disability are eligible for organisation permits.

The work carried out by Council rangers includes the patrol of 14 car parks throughout the city, however only 36 infringements for unauthorised parking in a disability parking space were issued in 2012-13. Complaints at community consultations and activities to Council's ageing and disability staff would indicate a much higher level of unauthorised parking by non Mobility Parking Scheme Permit holders. In 2013, the penalty for unauthorised parking in a disability parking space was \$506.

The BCA³⁰ has a ratio of 1:100 disability parking spaces, however Council's DCP has a ratio of 1:50 disability parking spaces; there is also a requirement in some types of development eg medical facilities for a higher ratio. This is due to the number of permit holders and complaints received about the inadequacy of disability parking particularly at hospitals/medical facilities, commercial/retail developments, schools, and community and recreation facilities

Transport

Older residents of Lake Macquarie continue to express concern that access to an adequate and appropriate public transport system is not available. This means that a large number of older people are dependent on family, neighbours, or community support organisations to attend medical appointments, social outings and/or shopping. The use of mobility scooters is still increasing in the area as a means of accessing local services and facilities.

Whilst most areas on the eastern side of the lake have regular government bus services, the routes are long and circuitous and are not popular with residents. There are no train services in this area, with people travelling to Sydney needing to travel into Newcastle to make a connection.

A mix of government and private bus services operate on the northern side of the lake. Once again, the routes are circuitous however; the frequency of services is not as regular as those provided on the eastern side of the lake. Train services to Newcastle and Sydney can be accessed at Cardiff, but there are often issues related to bus/train connections. Some areas in this northern sector have no public bus service and are completely reliant on car travel.

Residents on the western side of the lake have the least access to public transport. Whilst train services operate through the area, only Fassifern and Morisset are serviced by all trains. These stations also have lifts to provide access to all platforms. Private buses service part of the area however, some areas such as Cooranbong have limited services with gaps of up to two hours during the day, and no services on weekends. Fassifern has poor facilities for set down and pick up of bus passengers who use the train to travel to Sydney, Cardiff or Newcastle.

There are no wheelchair accessible toilet facilities at Fassifern or Morisset stations. Also, train stock currently in use in the area does not cater for people with a disability

³⁰ *Building Code of Australia 2012*

as no appropriate seating and/or space for wheelchairs is provided, and there are no accessible toilet facilities.

Council has continued to advocate for a transport interchange at Glendale, improved service provision including additional services and catchment areas, and assistance with funding of bus stop upgrades.

Bus stops

In 2002, the Commonwealth Government passed a disability standard for public transport³¹. This standard required 55% of bus stops to be accessible for people with a disability by 2012. The City of Lake Macquarie has 1,300 bus stops and has been unable to meet this requirement as it was totally reliant on its own funds for bus stop upgrades. Many bus stops in the area are on gravel or uneven ground. Also, in many outlying areas, there are no designated bus stops and users are required to hail a bus to travel. In 2012-13, Council upgraded eight bus stops, this included, paving, kerb and gutter, bus shelter, seating, tactile ground surface indicators, and signage.

Up until July 2013, Lake Macquarie LGA was considered to be a metropolitan area and therefore ineligible to apply for grants under the NSW Country Passenger Infrastructure Grants Program³². This classification has recently changed and Lake Macquarie is now eligible for this Program, however is still unlikely to meet the 90% compliance by 2017, or the 100% compliance by 2022³³.

Pedestrian Infrastructure

The ageing of the population and increased physical activity by all residents has led to an increasing number of requests for new or improved footpaths, kerb ramps, pedestrian refuges and pedestrian crossings. Many requests for footpaths to aid individual residents with mobility limitations are unable to be met due to the size of the area serviced and budget limitations.

In 2013, Council endorsed a strategy that includes a ten year program³⁴ that prioritises footpath design and construction. The strategy considers how close a footpath is to commercial areas, schools, seniors housing and community buildings. The strategy also considers factors such as links to public transport routes, safety, and potential development opportunities.

Kerb side mowing

Increased physical activity by seniors is increasing the need for public places to be mown more frequently. Unmown sites hide hazards and increase the risk of falls. Currently, the number and frequency of sites mown is limited due to budgetary constraints. The current frequency of kerb side mowing at sites is:

		EAST SIDE	WEST SIDE
Routine mowing	(2 times per annum)	428	640
High visibility areas	(5 times per annum)	73	45

³¹ *Disability Standard for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT)*

³² www.transport.nsw.gov.au/content/country-passenger-transport-infrastructure-grants-scheme-cptigs

³³ www.humanrights.gov.au/australian-human-rights-commission-accessible-bus-stops-guidelines

³⁴ *Footpath Strategy 2013-23*

Community and recreation facilities

Currently Council has 75 operational community facilities and 118 operational recreation facilities. In 2011, Council completed an Asset Maturity Audit of its community and recreation facilities. In 2012, this audit informed decisions for an Asset Management Strategy and the allocation of resources in the three year Asset Management Implementation Plan.

Additionally Council has compiled a Sports Facility Strategy 2009-14 and a Community Facilities Strategy in 2011. These strategies look at usage, suitability of facilities for various types of usage, accessibility, the relationship of the facility to the local area, and to other facilities of similar type throughout the city. The Disability Action Plan also outlines a program of work for upgrading the accessibility of community and recreation facilities.

Currently, 11 community facilities are used as a base for community support services for older people, and 35 community facilities are used for activities for seniors. This includes four facilities that provide both a base for service provision and activity areas. Services based in Council's facilities include meals on wheels, day care centres, community transport and home modification and maintenance. Activities include men's shed, support groups, pensioner associations, gentle exercise groups, life long learning groups, computer clubs, hobby, and craft activities.

Whilst there are 118 operational recreation facilities, seniors use only 28 facilities regularly. Seniors actively use tennis, petanque, croquet and bowls facilities; however football, cricket and basketball facilities are mainly used by seniors as spectators.

Currently Council has six swim centres. These are located at Swansea, Charlestown, Speers Point, West Wallsend, Toronto and Morisset. Some programs run at centres have consistently attracted seniors as participants and this has increased the need for improved safety features such as additional seating, handrails in shower areas, and non slip surfaces. Hydrotherapy is only available in the Toronto centre. In July 2013, Council introduced the Companion Card to enable a person with a disability who was unable to swim unaided, entry with a carer for a single fee.

Parks and foreshore areas are popular with seniors particularly those that include picnic facilities, toilets and pathways. Council also coordinates walking groups in conjunction with the Heart Foundation and NSW Sport and Recreation.

Recent research³⁵ found that 73.3% of people aged 60-69 years in the Hunter Region were overweight or obese. This research also found that Lake Macquarie residents had a higher than NSW average rate of not meeting the physical activity recommendation of 30 minutes of moderate to high intensity rating of exercise 5 days per week. Whilst many parks have shared pathways there are currently no parks with outdoor exercise equipment suitable for seniors/adults who may be unable to afford gym membership.

Council also leases the highly used Valentine Hydrotherapy Pool and the Hunter Sports Centre to community organisations.

Public toilets

Access to clean safe public toilets is important to seniors. A growing number also require access to wheelchair accessible public toilets. In 2010/11, Council undertook

³⁵ *Hunter Medicare Local and the Hunter Valley Research Foundation 2013*

an investigation³⁶ to identify the condition of its public toilets and to plan replacement and upgrading of facilities.

Waste

Council provides an assisted waste collection service (Blue Dot) to people with a disability who are unable to place bins out on the street for collection, and have no relative, friend or neighbour who is able to do this task for them on a regular basis. In June 2013, Council was providing 615 “Blue Dot” services. This service is currently increasing at approximately 136 new services per annum.

There are a number of issues related to the provision of this service including:

- Cost - the actual cost to provide a Blue Dot service is \$670 per annum compared to \$82.71 per annum for domestic waste collection excluding recycling and green waste. (Blue Dot is currently being subsidized by the domestic waste management charge);
- Timing - whilst Council’s parks and commercial trucks with runners usually provide the Blue Dot service, Council’s amenity cleaners service approximately 19 difficult sites. As the starting time for these staff and vehicles is 3:30 am this can present issues related to noise in local neighbourhoods where the majority of residents are sleeping;
- Work, health and safety issues - include onsite hazards, carrying bagged waste, and lack of light;
- Perceived ease to gain doctors certificate for service and lack of exploring alternatives (friends, neighbours, relatives assisting) before requesting a Blue Dot service, also clusters of services;
- Lack of advice from service recipients (or family) when service no longer required.

Library

In March 2013, there were 22,048 members of the city’s library aged 55 years and over. This is 33.63% of the library’s total membership.

Library services currently include large print and talking books, a home library service for people who are housebound; equipment to assist people with a vision impairment, an individual loan service and bulk loans to residential aged care facilities, a mobile library service and ten branch libraries.

The increase in the ageing population and the number of people with a disability living in the community has resulted in Library staff needing to learn additional skills and increase their knowledge of technology, resources and services to meet these challenges.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries are not an essential service for council to provide, as it is a personal/cultural/religious choice for residents on where and how they memorialise their loved ones. However, Council currently manages nine cemeteries. These are located at Belmont, Barnsley, Catherine Hill Bay, Morisset, Martinsville, Toronto,

³⁶ *Public Toilet Facilities Strategy 2011*

West Wallsend, Whitebridge and Wyee. In 2008, Council endorsed a Cemetery Strategy³⁷ to assist in determining future land use and procedures.

The NSW Government recently passed the first cemeteries legislation³⁸ in 100 years to ensure sufficient land is available for burials and equitable access to cemetery and crematoria services. Regulations will cover all cemeteries/crematoria (private, state and local government) and will also offer operators the option of providing renewable tenure for interment places. This will allow people to purchase a renewable licence for a grave for 99 years that can be renewed in blocks of 25 years.

Information

Council's website remains a source of information for many seniors and their family members seeking suitable activities, or access to support services to maintain them in their own home. The website is expanded on a regular basis with new and updated content. In June 2013, a Carers' page was added to the services section. Seniors and people with a disability have also been involved in user testing of Council's website.

The number of customer telephone enquiries related specifically to ageing and disability issues has dropped to approximately 20 per week³⁹. This is due in part to the information sessions held as part of the Seniors Program, the information available on the website, and participation by Council's ageing and disability staff in Seniors' Expos, and by presenting information to large local seniors organisations at their regular meetings.

Community organisations

Significant changes are happening to the way that services are being provided in both the ageing and disability sector. Council's ageing and disability staff are currently working with local community organizations to assist them to be able to respond to the changes brought about by the aged care reforms and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Disaster planning

The recent bushfires have again highlighted the need to plan for the evacuation of frail older people and people with a disability. To date Council has collected information on groups of vulnerable people such as retirement villages, refuges, group homes, child care centres and residential parks. This information has been passed on to Family and Community Services who coordinate the welfare response and recovery. However, there is a need to plan for individuals in the community who may be vulnerable because of their age and/or disability. Council also runs disaster preparedness activities such as participation in the early warning network and information on its webpage.

³⁷ Cemetery Strategy 2008

³⁸ Cemeteries and Crematoria Bill 2013

³⁹ Enquiries down from 35 per week

Tourism and Holiday Parks

Council holiday parks provide sites for permanent residents in addition to long term holiday vans and visitors. The total number of visitor nights in 2012-13 was 357,650 at the locations listed below. It is estimated that 40-45% of visitors were aged 55 years or over, this is at least 143,060 visitor nights⁴⁰.

- Blacksmiths 44,983
- Belmont 69,944
- Wangi 39,658
- Swansea 203,065

All permanent residents are aged 55 years and over. The number of permanent residents, holiday van sites, and total sites in each park location are:

- Blacksmiths -1 permanent site (1 person), 33 holiday van sites, 132 total sites.
- Belmont – 2 permanent sites (3 people), 24 holiday van sites, 120 total sites.
- Wangi - 5 permanent sites (9 people), 60 holiday van sites, 155 total sites.
- Swansea - 23 permanent sites (35 people), 181 holiday van sites. 382 total sites

The number of senior visitor and permanent residents at Council's holiday parks has increased the need to ensure that amenities, reception, communal/recreation facilities, internal roads and parking are all easily accessible. Work to improve safety and access has been undertaken and a further four year program of improvements is under way. Cabins suitable for occupation by a person in a wheelchair are also scheduled for construction at each park.

Water based activities

In 2012-13, the Royal Life Saving Society⁴¹ reported that of the 291 people who drowned in Australia during that period, 114 were aged 55 years and over. This may be due to increased water based activities such as boating, fishing, swimming and surfing by baby boomers who have retired or reduced their working hours. As Lake Macquarie has a lifestyle where water based activities are popular there is a need to consider programs targeting seniors that promote water safety.

Beaches

Community consultations show an increasing need to provide an accessible path of travel between beach car park areas and the water. Seniors and people with a disability are often excluded from beach activities with family members, as they are unable to safely cross the large areas of soft sand on local beaches. An accessible path to the water would also assist many families with young children.

Pensioner subsidy

Lake Macquarie currently has approximately 17,500 ratepayers receiving pensioner rate rebates. This number has not increased over the past five years. However, as the projected increases in the age of older people will increase the number of people

⁴⁰ *Property (LMCC)*

⁴¹ *National Drowning Report 2013*

seeking pensions, the number of pensioner rebates in the area needs to be monitored, as significant increases will adversely affect Council's finances.

Employment

Council is one of the largest employers in the area, employing both skilled and unskilled labour. Approximately 75% of Council' employees are permanent full time and 11% are permanent part time. The remainder are temporary and casual employees (see page 23 for age groupings).

Age Groupings of Council's Permanent Employees 2012⁴²		
Age group	No of employees	Comment
60 + years	79	18 of these are over 65 years
50-59 years	314	150 of these are 55-59 years
40-49 years	267	
30-39 years	222	
20-29 years	107	
Total	989	39.73% of Council permanent employees are aged 50+ years

Council has already introduced workplace practices such as graduated retirement and flexible work hours aimed at retaining older employees. A Workforce Management Strategy⁴³ was also developed and implementation is in progress.

Research⁴⁴ shows that there is a continuous projected fall in the total labour market supply for the City of Lake Macquarie. Local businesses should be encouraged to undertake initiatives to retain older workers.

Estimated Labour Market Supply – Lake Macquarie				
Year	2013	2016	2021	2026
Total	95,231	94,775	93,232	91,929

⁴² Human Resources (LMCC)

⁴³ Community Strategic Plan 2013-23

⁴⁴ Resource for Ageing Population Planning 2.0 (RAPP 2.0)

Action Plan 2014-17

All strategies in this action plan are within existing resources

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Consultation	Consultation with older people and seniors about their needs and council projects.	Maintain the Ageing and Disability Panel and consult broadly on projects that affect these groups.	Ongoing	CP + All Departments	Record of meetings and consultations.
Ageing and disability staff	Commonwealth Government funding programs under review.	Report any funding changes that affect the ageing and disability specific staff to Council.	March 2015	CP	Report to Council on completion of review if required.
Non discriminatory access and use	Access to a range of community, recreational, retail and commercial facilities is limited for people with a disability.	Provide comment on development applications for all facilities with a public use to ensure accessibility.	Ongoing	CP	Annual activity report on the number of development applications, designs, and plans reviewed for comment.
		Provide comment on master plans and designs for Council infrastructure.			
		Monitor relevant standards, legislation and local complaints to determine and implement changes to the DCP.			

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Seniors housing	Ability of seniors to age in place is adversely affected by the limited availability of suitable housing options.	Implement recommendations of the Seniors Housing Strategy.	Ongoing	CP + IP	Annual activity report
Seniors Program	Limited opportunities for seniors to gain appropriate information to assist with decision making, and develop skills to keep mentally and physically active.	Continue the Program using a range of community, government and private organisations to assist with the provision of sessions.	Ongoing	CP + CS + LS	Annual activity report detailing number of sessions and participants.
	No current sponsor for the Seniors Program reduces the ability to advertise sessions.	Call expressions of interest for sponsorship of the Seniors Program.	March 2014	COM	Activity report on contacts with potential sponsors
Disability parking	Need to maintain adequate ratio of disability parking spaces in new and modified developments.	Monitor the number of Mobility Parking Scheme permit holders and complaints about inadequate disability parking in order to modify DCP requirements and to direct patrols by rangers.	Ongoing	CP + WER + CSC + IP	Annual request to obtain number of permit holders. Quarterly review of disability parking complaints.

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Transport	Need for increased public transport services, improved time tables and connectivity between services.	Advocate for additional and modified transport services to be provided.	Ongoing	CP + IP + AM	Annual activity report
	Need to upgrade bus stops to comply with the Commonwealth Public Transport Standard.	Review the priority list for bus stop upgrades.	June annually	AM + CP	Review documented
	Improved accessibility between Southlake area and Wyong Hospital due to inadequate level of local health services.	Continue to advocate for improved transport services through Transport NSW.	Ongoing	CP + AM	Annual activity report
Pedestrian infrastructure	Need to increase pedestrian infrastructure to access local retail/commercial areas, health facilities, and housing developments for seniors.	Implement the Footpath Strategy 2013. Monitor additional footpath requests.	Ongoing	AM + CP	Annual activity report
Kerbside mowing	Need to increase mowing of public places to reduce hazards.	Identify priority sites for additional mowing for consideration in budget requests.	June annually	CIV + CP + AM	Priority sites documented for consideration in future budgets.

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Community and recreation facilities	Need to maintain a range of community and recreation facilities that are accessible and suitable for activities for seniors.	Implement the Community Facility Strategy recommendations.	Ongoing	CP + AM	Annual activity report
		Investigate the provision of outdoor exercise equipment in areas with high populations of seniors.	March 2015	CP	Investigation documented for consideration in future budgets.
Public toilets	Need to maintain public toilets in key locations that are clean, safe and accessible.	Implement the Public Toilet Strategy recommendations.	Ongoing	CP + AM + CIV	Annual activity report
Waste	Increasing demand for assisted waste collection service.	Implement a new procedure to determine eligibility.	February 2014	WER + CP	Procedure implemented
		Carry out Good Neighbour awareness activities to increase community support.	Ongoing	CP + WER	Annual activity report
	Cost of assisted waste collection service.	Monitor new eligibility procedure and review costs to determine further action.	June annually	WER + CP	Review documented
	Timing and work health and safety issues.	Monitor service for resident complaints, record of staff injuries, etc.	Ongoing	WER	Review documented

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Library	Need to ensure the location of branches, services provided, and resources available, are appropriate to older people	Monitor usage, investigate issues and initiate solutions.	Ongoing	CP + CS	Annual activity report
	Need to ensure that staff are aware of the issues related to older people, and are responsive to the needs of people with a range of health issues and disabilities.	Conduct workshops for Library staff on issues related to ageing and disability, and appropriate communication techniques for older people and people with a disability.	Ongoing	CP	Annual activity report
Cemeteries	Need to ensure adequate and appropriate options available for burial/memorials.	Continue implementation of the Cemeteries Strategy.	Ongoing	CP	Annual activity report
Information	Need to maintain a range of information sources.	Continue to update home page, compile hard copy brochures as required, maintain training for Customer Service Centre staff. Also, maintain Seniors Program sessions, participation in Seniors Expos and talks to individual seniors' organisations.	Ongoing	CP + IT + COM	Annual activity report

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Disaster planning	Need to plan for the evacuation of vulnerable people in the event of a disaster.	Work with government and community organisations to investigate how vulnerable individuals may be assisted to evacuate in the event of a disaster.	Ongoing	CP + SUS + WER	Annual activity report
		Conduct a survey of facilities where groups of vulnerable people are located to determine numbers on site and assistance required to evacuate.	September annually	CP	Survey results documented and provided to Family and Community Services.
Community organisations	Support of funded and non funded community organisations providing services to and activities for older seniors.	Continue the provision of affordable accessible venues for activities and services, and provision of advice to organisations as required.	Ongoing	CP	Annual activity report
		Assist ageing and disability service providers as required in the changing climate of aged care reform and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.			
Swim Centres	Improved accessibility features required at Swim Centres.	Implement Pool Service Delivery Model.	Ongoing	LS	Annual activity report

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Beaches	Improved accessibility to water at beaches.	Investigate the feasibility of an accessible path from the clubhouse to the water at Blacksmiths and Caves Beaches.	June 14	CP + LS	Investigation complete and documented
Water based activities	Increasing number of seniors drowning	Incorporate water safety awareness for seniors into existing community education program.	Ongoing	LS	Annual activity report
Tourism	Holiday parks need continual improvements to remain suitable for use by the growing number of senior users.	<p>Belmont - reconstruction of roads, increased street lighting, provision of a cabin with disability access, and new recreation room.</p> <p>Blacksmiths - provision of a cabin with disability access and new recreation room.</p> <p>Swansea - provision of a cabin with disability access, improvements to camping area.</p> <p>Wangi - provision of a cabin with disability access, extension of office with disability access and parking.</p>	2013-17	PROP	Annual activity report

Priority Area	Issue	Strategy	Completion Time	Partners	Performance Indicator
Tourism (cont)	Need to increase the accessibility of private accommodation and tourist sites	Provide information to tourist site and accommodation providers on accessibility standards.	Ongoing	VIC + CP	Annual activity report
Health advocacy	Improved access to health services for the Southlake area	Provide support to the Southlake Integrated Health Care Facility Committee.	Ongoing	CP	Annual activity report
		Provide support to the South Lake Macquarie Public Transport Action Group.			
Employment	Council's ageing work force and decreasing number of local labour market participants	Implement the recommendations of the Workforce Management Strategy.	Ongoing	HR	Annual activity report
	Falling labour market numbers	Encourage local businesses to undertake initiatives to retain older workers.	Ongoing	EDB	Annual activity report
Pensioner rebates	Effect of pensioner rebates on Council's income	Monitor number of rebates claimed to determine the impact on Council's finances.	June annually	FIN	Annual report

List of References

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Census of Population and Housing 2011
Survey of Ageing Disability and Carers 2009

Australian Human Rights Commission

Disability Standard for Accessible Public transport
Accessible Bus Stop Guidelines

Australian Network for Universal Housing Design

<http://www.anuhd.org/>

Department of Health and Ageing

Living Longer Living Better – Aged Care Reform in Action
Statistical Local Area Projections 2007-2027

Department of Human Services

Centrelink Age Pension Rates

Lake Macquarie City Council

Local Environment Plan
Development Control Plan No 1
Seniors Housing Strategy 2012
Disability Action Plan 2013-2017
Cultural Diversity in Lake Macquarie Community Report 2012
Aboriginal Community Plan 2012-2013
Public Toilet Facilities Strategy 2012
Community Facilities Strategy 2011
Asset Maturity Audit 2011
Sports facility Strategy 2009-14
Footpath Strategy 2013

Local Government NSW

Resource for Ageing Population Planning 2.0

Hunter Medicare Local

Joint research project with Hunter Valley Research Foundation on lifestyles
2013

Melbourne University Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research

Poverty Lines September 2011

Productivity Commission

Caring for Older Australians 2011

Royal Life Saving Society Australia

National Drowning Report 2013

World Health Organisation

Age Friendly Cities: A Guide 2007

Appendix 1

Outcome of Ageing Population Plan 2008-17

Overview

Council endorsed the Ageing Population Plan 2008-17 in March 2008, prior to the global financial crisis. Consequently, some projects have been modified or have not proceeded due to financial constraints however, the intent to plan for our ageing population remains.

Planner and regulator of the built environment

Adaptable housing

In 2008, DCP 1 was revised to include a 10% ratio of adaptable housing in residential flat and multi unit housing developments. This inclusion in large housing developments has provided additional housing options for local seniors.

Universal design

The revision of DCP 1 also included universal design principles in areas such as streetscape and public open space. Projects included Windale shopping centre footpath upgrade, the Speers Point Park amenities, and the Red Bluff shared pathway.

Seniors housing strategy

In 2012, Council undertook a Seniors Housing Strategy that outlined the current local housing stock, models of seniors' housing available, the benefits and constraints of models, and planning and regulatory controls. It also provided recommendations for the future development of council policies and planning instruments related to seniors' housing.

The strategy looked at purpose built seniors' housing such as retirement villages and infill independent living units, residential parks, rental accommodation and home ownership. The strategy also identified the need to prepare maps identifying land suitable for seniors' housing developments in association with LEP 2011, to aid the development industry to locate suitable sites closer to a range of services. This mapping exercise was completed in 2013.

Patrol of disability parking

Areas patrolled by Council's Rangers include both Council owned car parks and private car parks where agreements for patrol are in place:

- Smart Street Charlestown
- Charlestown Square
- Belmont City Centre (Stockton Street)
- Belmont Shopping Centre (Macquarie Road)
- Mattara Car Park Charlestown
- Toronto Car Park (Brighton Avenue)
- Coles complex car park Toronto
- Cardiff (Harrison Street)
- Cardiff (Under Woolworths)
- Edgeworth Shopping Centre

- Stockland Glendale
- Morisset Shopping Centre
- Part of Car park adjacent to Morisset Train Station
- Redhead Surf Club

In 2012-13, only 36 infringements were issued however, complaints from people with a disability indicate that unauthorized parking by non Mobility Parking Scheme Permit holders is much higher.

Owner and manager of the built and natural environment

Pedestrian infrastructure

In the period 2008-13, Council constructed 11 kilometres of footpath, and 30 kilometres of shared pathway. Shared pathway included completion of the Fernleigh Track that links Adamstown and Belmont in 2011, and construction of the Red Bluff extension of the pathway between Warners Bay and Croudace Bay in 2012. A 10 year strategy⁴⁵ for the construction of footpaths was also endorsed by Council in 2013.

Bus stops

In the period 2008-13, Council carried out 32 bus stop upgrades. This work included construction of bus shelter, seating, signage, paving, kerb and gutter, and installation of tactile ground surface indicators in each location.

Public toilets

In 2011, a strategy⁴⁶ was developed to determine a program for the maintenance upgrading and replacement of Council's public toilets. This strategy also identified locations for wheelchair accessible toilet facilities to be constructed, and made recommendations on the frequency of cleaning for high use facilities.

Priorities included replacement of the Speers Point Park amenities that was completed in 2012, replacement of the Warners Bay Foreshore amenities completed in 2013, and replacement of the Redhead Beach public amenities that is timed to commence in March 2014. Some refurbishment of existing toilet facilities has occurred with funds from the special rate variation approved by IPART in 2012.

Recreation facilities

Council has developed strategies to assist in the upgrading and development of swim centres⁴⁷ and sporting facilities⁴⁸.

Work on upgrading facilities has occurred with funds allocated as part of Council's Disability Action Plan, Sports Facility Strategy and Asset Management Strategy. Work has included:

- Surf Clubs - lift access and wheelchair accessible toilet facilities provided to the first floor function areas at Blacksmiths Beach in 2008, Caves Beach in 2010, and Redhead Beach in 2012.

⁴⁵ *Footpath Strategy 2013-23*

⁴⁶ *Public Toilet Facilities Strategy 2011*

⁴⁷ *Pool Service Delivery Model*

⁴⁸ *Sports Facility Strategy*

- Petanque Centre at Teralba - disability parking, pathways and wheelchair accessible toilet facility provided in 2012.
- Swansea Swim Centre – construction of new amenities including a wheelchair accessible shower and toilet facility in 2012.

Community facilities

In 2011, Council completed a strategy⁴⁹ that sets an action plan for the upgrading and replacement of Council's community facilities.

Work on upgrading facilities has occurred with funds allocated as part of Council's Disability Action Plan, Community Facilities Strategy and Asset Management Strategy. Work has included:

- Marks Point Community Hall - disability parking, ramp entry and wheelchair accessible toilet facility in 2008.
- Belmont Senior Citizens Centre – major refurbishment including car park reseal, disability parking, new ramp entry, wheelchair accessible toilet and a new kitchen in 2009.
- Bolton Point Community Hall - disability parking, ramp entry, and wheelchair accessible toilet facility in 2010.
- Argenton Community Hall - ramp entry, wheelchair accessible toilet facility and a new kitchen in 2011.
- Teralba Community Hall - disability parking, ramp entry and wheelchair accessible toilet facility in 2011.
- Dudley Pensioners Hall – new kitchen
- Marmong Point Community Hall - disability parking, ramp entry and wheelchair accessible toilet facility in 2012.
- Holmesville Community Hall – disability parking, ramp entry, wheelchair accessible toilet facility, refurbishment of general toilet facilities and a new kitchen in 2013.
- Cardiff Senior Citizens Centre – new ramp entry in 2013.

During the period 2008-13, Council has also constructed an extension to the Art Gallery in 2008, and acquired a new community facility, The Place, at Charlestown in 2011.

The results of other items listed for work in the Ageing Population Plan 2008-17 include:

- Lake Macquarie Newcastle Home Modification and Maintenance Inc - upgraded the existing factory/office building it leases from Council instead of the proposed relocation.
- Meals on Wheels production kitchens not yet changed to distribution centres due to timing of government funding programs.
- Construction of respite care centres at Swansea, Toronto, Cardiff and Morisset delayed due to the absence of government capital funding programs.

⁴⁹ *Community Facilities Strategy 2011*

The bulk of residents who have been involved in the management of Council's community facilities have mainly been older people. In addition to the continued increase in the city's older population, accountability requirements for participating in the management of a community facility have also increased. This has led to a number of long term board members relinquishing their role, and in some cases there has been no other resident willing to take on management responsibilities. This has resulted in some changes to the management structures for facilities. Currently Council has 24 community facilities leased to non profit community groups eg Mercy Services leases the former West Wallsend Bowling Club, 10 remain as Board of Management eg Dudley Pensioners Hall, and 8 have returned to Council for coordination of bookings and maintenance eg Garden Suburb Community Hall.

Council has 11 community facilities that are used as a base for home support services for seniors, and 38 community facilities that are used for activities for seniors. Council provides these groups with subsidised lease and/or user fees.

Cemeteries

The Cemetery Strategy was endorsed in 2008⁵⁰. With the increase in cremations, (currently at approximately 75 to 80% in the Hunter Region whilst the National Average is 65%) the strategy identified the need to provide the community with more memorialisation choices across council's cemeteries, encouraging longevity and sustainability. These choices include, walls, gardens, and boulders for memorialisation. Council has also encouraged families to utilise use less burial space by having graves dug to double depth and also interring ashes of other family members in the same grave.

The rate of cremation is higher than burial in the Hunter, but is not reflected in the interment statistics as families may choose to retain, scatter at favourite location or memorialise ashes in family plots, walls or gardens at private, council or trust cemeteries. Sites specifically for the interment of ashes have been provided in selected Lake Macquarie City Council cemeteries for approximately 10 years. All cemeteries have been operational since the late 1800's. The number of interments (ash & burials) in graves has kept steady at approximately 200 per year. This number has been consistent over the last five years with the number of ash installations into family or new graves increasing to about 14% of burials. (Standardised Death Rate for Lake Macquarie Local Government Area has remained at 6% of the population over the last three years.)

Reservation for future interment and placement of plaques and ashes in gardens and walls has increased with the provision of more areas within Council's cemeteries to memorialise. Council completed over 100 installations in walls, gardens and boulders in the 2013 financial year compared to 60 five years ago in 2008. Incidentally, for each ash interment/installation in a wall/garden/boulder, another is generally sold as a reservation for a family member.

Capital works related to the implementation of Cemetery Strategy have provided Belmont, West Wallsend and Whitebridge with memorial gardens built around existing niche/columbarium walls. With demand on the eastern side of the lake higher for cremation memorialisation, the number of niche/columbarium walls provided has increased to 12 at Belmont and 11 at Whitebridge cemeteries. A wall has also been recently installed in Catherine Hill Bay Cemetery. These cemeteries also have

⁵⁰ LMCC Cemetery Strategy 2008

memorial boulders installed (where the families choose to scatter ashes) and commemorate with a plaque.

On the eastern side of the city at Belmont and Whitebridge, burials for people without a reservation have been unavailable since the late 1990's due to the lack of burial space. This has limited the local community to a choice only of cremation memorialisation (niche/columbarium walls/gardens). Space was identified in these cemeteries, to access and utilise existing land in between unused older areas of the cemetery and in areas that in the past have been too difficult to excavate/access. This area is being developed to maximise space sustainability and allow option for "Immediate Use Burials" only, with no reservations available, where plots are dug to double depth and accessed progressively (utilising space in the cemetery).

The strategy also identified the need to develop a master Plan for Toronto Cemetery as this is the area with the largest burial capacity; this was completed in 2010. Capital Works are scheduled to commence in 2013/14, with Stage One the development of garden and wall areas.

Service provider

Ageing and disability staff

In 2008, Council increased the hours of the Ageing and Disability Support Worker from 16 to 35 hours per week. This action has had a significant impact on Council's ability to respond to the impact of the ageing population and allowed staff to be proactive in dealing with issues. One of the main tasks undertaken by this position is the development of the Seniors Program that is well accepted and regarded by seniors in the community. The extension of this position has also allowed the Community Planner Ageing and Disability position to undertake more strategic planning tasks such as the Seniors Housing Strategy and the Public Toilet Facilities Strategy. It also allows more input on non discriminatory access and use into master plans and the design of infrastructure.

Assisted waste collection

Council provides an assisted waste collection service (Blue Dot) to people with a disability who are unable to place bins out on the street for collection, and have no relative, friend or neighbour who is able to do this task for them on a regular basis. This service requires a doctor's referral to be eligible. In June 2013, Council was providing 615 "Blue Dot" services.

Library

In 2012, seniors made up 33.63% of the libraries total membership. Library services included:

- 67 people who regularly received talking books ;
- 164 people in private homes or independent living units who received the home library service;
- 30 nursing homes regularly visited, separate to home library deliveries with 180 people in residential aged care facilities who received an individual service;
- 12 residential aged care facilities that received a bulk loan.

Seniors Program

The Lake Macquarie Seniors' Program commenced in 2008 to replace the focus on activities coordinated by Council being held only during Seniors Week

The Program focuses on health, safety and wellbeing and allows seniors to experience the benefit of various types of gentle exercise at free introductory sessions, to gain additional information to assist with decision making, and to participate in activities that stimulate the mind. Information sessions and workshops on a range of topics also promote life long learning and healthy lifestyles.

The program is free to residents of Lake Macquarie aged 55 years and over. The Program also involves a range of community, government, business, and charitable organisations, in addition to Council services. In 2012-13, the Lake Macquarie Seniors Program offered 33 sessions that were attended by 1,756 participants. Feedback from participants attending sessions across the Program resulted in an overall satisfaction rate of 99%.

Some comments received from participants attending Program sessions include:

- Knowledge and skills gained from sessions has improved my confidence and motivation to try new things.
- My quality of life has improved.
- The information on residential care and the assessment process was very helpful.
- The computer classes have helped me to develop my skills to keep in touch with family and friends who live interstate and overseas.

UnitingCare Ageing sponsored the Program between January 2010 and June 2013.

Holiday Parks

Extensive work has been completed over the last 4 years to improve access for people with a disability and older people at all parks. This has included:

- Belmont - extensive road work, additional street lighting, a new amenities block and campers kitchen;
- Blacksmiths - additional road work and street lighting; a wheelchair accessible cabin; office extension and modification;
- Swansea - improved visitor car parking, new swimming pool and camper's kitchen with recreation room, office extension and modification. Also, provision of a footpath that allows park residents to access the foreshore and bus stop.
- Wangi - extensive road work, and refurbished amenities.

Older drivers and pedestrians

Up until 2012, Council staff undertook information sessions for older drivers and pedestrians at least twice a year. In 2012, Roads and Maritime Services commenced these workshops with Council referring local organisation to Roads and Maritime Services. In 2012-13, six workshops were held with 218 participants.

Mobility scooters

Education sessions for scooter users have been held at least annually by Council or by ageing and disability organisations. The use of scooters is also included in older driver and pedestrian information sessions. In 2011, Council staff updated the

Scooter Survival Guide on behalf of the regional participating councils. The Roads and Traffic Authority approved Guide. Council has also distributed the Guide to other councils throughout NSW on a cost recovery basis.

Information

Council's home page remains a source of information for many seniors and their family members seeking activities, or access to support services to maintain them in their own home. The information on ageing and disability sections of Council's home page is regularly updated, and extended. In 2012, there were 2,706 visitors to Council's ageing and disability pages.

The number of telephone customer enquiries has dropped to approximately 20 per week, this is due in part to the information sessions held as part of the Seniors Program. In 2012, Council's ageing and disability staff also participated in five seniors' expos, and gave three aged service information talks to large seniors' organizations.

In 2009, when the need to establish an advisory panel on ageing was discussed, members of Council's Disability Access Panel suggested that as many of the issues that were relevant to them were also relevant to older people. It was recommended that Council form a single advisory panel dealing with both target groups. The Ageing and Disability Panel held its first meeting in February 2010. Members consist of people with a disability, seniors, carers and representatives of organisations providing services to these target groups. The Panel meets bimonthly and comments on draft strategies, in addition to providing Council with information on issues of concern to the target group, and providing information on relevant Council projects back into the community.

Employer

Council has introduced workplace practices such as graduated retirement and flexible work hours aimed at retaining older employees. A Workforce Management Strategy⁵¹ was also developed and implementation is in progress.

Community Leader and advocate

Transport

Council has been actively involved in advocating for the Glendale Interchange. This project will provide an integrated system of transport modes that will connect people with the residential, retail, and industrial areas at Glendale. In 2012, Council received confirmation of a grant of \$7 million from the Commonwealth Government's Regional Development Australia Fund towards the Glendale Interchange. This grant combined with \$15 million from the NSW Government will allow the first stage of the Glendale Interchange to proceed.

⁵¹ *Community Strategic Plan 2013-23*

Support to service providers and community organisations

Council owns 11 community facilities that are used as a base for community support services, and 35 community facilities that are used for activities for seniors. This includes four facilities that provide both a base for service provision and activity areas. Services based in Council's facilities include meals on wheels, day care centres, community transport and home modification and maintenance. Activities include men's shed, support groups, pensioner associations, gentle exercise groups, life long learning groups, computer clubs, hobby, and craft activities.

Mercy Community Services was assisted to establish a new base for its range of services in a Council owned facility at West Wallsend, and Eastlake Dementia Centre constructed a new purpose built facility adjacent to Belmont Hospital.

Since 2008, Council's ageing and disability staff have successfully supported a large number of applications by local organisations for increased funds for local support services to assist older people to remain in their own homes.

In the past three years, there have been significant changes to both the ageing and disability sectors with the introduction of the Commonwealth Government's Living Longer Living Better⁵² program that covers people over 65 years of age. This program puts more emphasis on people remaining in their own homes with a range of support services to assist them. Also, the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme⁵³ (which covers people up to the age of 64 years) has had a significant impact on service providers as funding models change, giving people with a disability more choice about providers and the types of services they can access. Council's ageing and disability staff have been assisting local community organisations to adjust management and service delivery process to meet these changes.

Health services

Recent research⁵⁴ has found that 21.3% of Lake Macquarie residents indicated that they had difficulty accessing a general practitioner when required. Whilst there has been some improvement in the provision of primary care services the population ratio per general practitioner still remains very high. When consultations were held for the Seniors Housing Strategy, access to general practitioners was a major issue, with some seniors recently moving to Lake Macquarie travelling up to 50 kilometres to attend their former general practitioner, as they were unable to attend a local practice.

In the Southlake area, the development of Waratah Medical Services with the assistance of a Commonwealth superclinic grant, has introduced an increased number of allied health services in addition to the number of general practitioners. This Service also recently introduced an after hours service on weekends. However, issues about access to outpatient's services and specialists' services still exist due to their location in Wyong and the inadequacy of public transport links. Council representatives are currently working with two local action groups in the Southlake area. The first is advocating for an integrated health care facility to be located in Morisset and the second is advocating for improved public transport links to Wyong health services.

⁵² *Living Longer Living Better*

⁵³ *National Disability Insurance Scheme*

⁵⁴ *Hunter Medicare Local and the Hunter Valley Research Foundation 2013*

Carers

In 2012, Council received funds from the Department of Health and Aging and NSW Ageing and Disability for a Carer Resource Project. This project employs a part time worker 12 hours per week and covers Newcastle as well as Lake Macquarie. The role of this project is to map the local support network for carers, to initiate new support groups for carers and to resource the Carers Action Network and other existing carer support group.

Achievements to June 2012 include two new carer support groups at Swansea and Beresfield, the addition of a carers' page to Council's website, and the introduction of a quarterly carers' newsletter.

Summary of outcomes

Despite financial limitations, Council has continued to upgrade existing facilities, construct new infrastructure, adapt planning controls, and operate programs that assist in promoting quality of life for its older residents.

Appendix 2

Items to be considered in longer term plans

Meals on Wheels

Government funding for food services has placed an emphasis on maintaining the independence of older people. This has meant that additional food services such as centre based meals, shopping services, food education and cooking sessions now complement the delivered meal service provided by MOW. There has also been a move away from each MOW kitchen preparing meals from scratch with prepared meals being purchased in bulk. This is resulting in the need to change the design of the facilities used by MOW.

In Lake Macquarie there are six MOW services. Four of these services operate from Council buildings or have self funded buildings on Council land. These are:

- Belmont – based in two council buildings but MOW has contributed significant funds to the fit out of a commercial kitchen.
- Boolaroo – based in a MOW owned demountable building that has been extended.
- Toronto - based in a MOW owned demountable building that has been extended.
- Swansea - based in a council building but MOW has contributed significant funds to the fit out of a commercial kitchen.

Currently there is no information on capital grants available from the Commonwealth or NSW Governments to convert these facilities from commercial kitchens to distribution centres with cool room storage for bulk meals. Other food service programs are suitable for council's existing community facilities.

Day Respite Centres

The Ageing Population Plan 2008-17 identified the need for a number of day respite care centres. Listed in priority order, these were:

- Swansea – day care for frail aged people; the site next to the existing Swansea Combined Pensioners and Community Care Centre was purchased to extend the existing building to include a purpose built day respite centre. Concept plans were prepared.
- Cardiff – day care for frail aged people; this could be provided at the Council owned facility leased to Mercy Services or onsite at one of the large seniors' housing developments. Current usage of Cardiff Senior Citizens Centre is too high to consider locating this service there.
- Morisset – day care for people with dementia; ideally this would be provided as an extension to the Morisset Multi Purpose Centre. Alternate sites would be the new community facility proposed for Cooranbong or on the site of one of the large seniors' housing developments
- Wangi/Rathmines - day care for frail aged people; no potential site identified.

- Charlestown - day care for people with dementia; ideally this would be provided within the Charlestown Multi Purpose Centre, either as a relocation of the frail aged day care service to the existing large activity room , or as an extension to the centre.

Currently there is no information on capital grants available from the Commonwealth or NSW Governments to design and construct new facilities or extend or modify existing facilities.