

# *Issues Paper*

## *Ageing Population*

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### **Issue**

The ageing population is increasing throughout Australia and the Western world. In the Shire of Hornsby the population of over 55s in 2010 will be 55,796 which is 34% of the total population. In 2020 the ageing population will increase to 68,692 which will be 41% of the total population. (ABS 2006).

#### Background

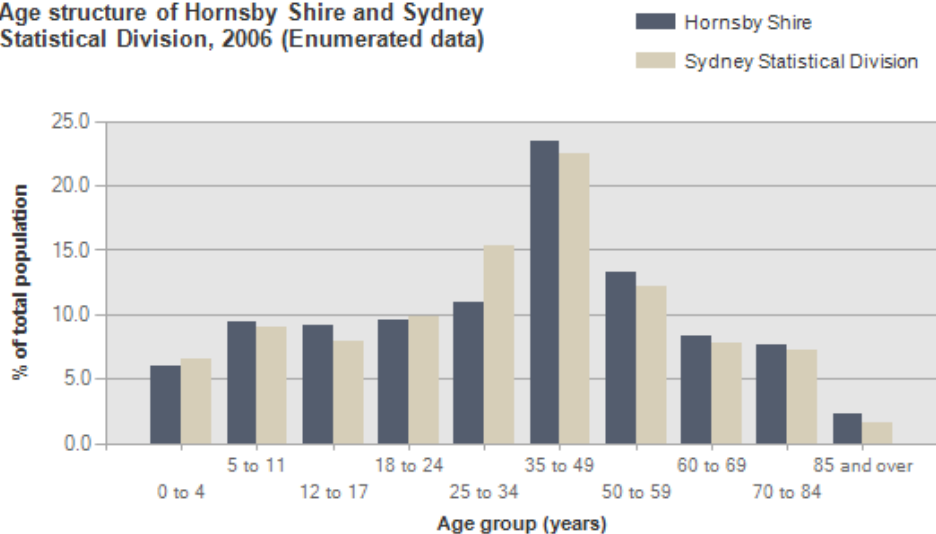
To understand the diverse range of older people in our community, the Council on the Ageing (COTA) categorised older people by life stage rather than age. The three stages identified by COTA are

1. Stage 1: The mature age employee and preretirement planning: people aged over 45 who are or wish to remain in the workforce;
2. Stage 2: Active retired: people who have entered retirement and are active with their family and or in their community;
3. Stage 3: Frail aged and Carers - people who, due to illness, injury and the frailty that comes with ageing, are in need of support for activities of daily living.

Older people contribute to the community through employment, caring for relatives, volunteering and advocacy, through participation in social and cultural life and as custodians of our history. Older people's wellbeing is influenced by advantages and disadvantages accumulated over a lifetime. These shape their sensitivity to crises and their resilience to them. The factors which contribute to ageing well and social inclusion include adequate income and material assets, appropriate and affordable housing, access to good quality health services, access to support and care according to need, access to transport, an age-friendly built environment, community attitudes of respect and acceptance, community connection and social networks, feeling safe, and opportunities to participate in all aspects of community life.

Hornsby Shire's aged population is older than average as shown below in the graphic representation of the age structure of Hornsby Shire compared to the Sydney Statistical Division (SSD) in 2006.

Age structure of Hornsby Shire and Sydney Statistical Division, 2006 (Enumerated data)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

The Hornsby Shire includes pockets of densely populated areas and isolated rural areas. Below is a break down of the over 55 population by years and areas:

### 55-64 Years

People aged 55 to 64 make up 11.0% of Hornsby Shire's population. Castle Hill and Waitara have the lowest percentage with 6.2% and 6.8% respectively. The suburbs with the greatest percentage of people in this age group are Hornsby Heights (14.0%) and Westleigh (15.0%). The suburbs with the greatest numbers of people aged 55 to 64 are Cherrybrook and Hornsby.

### 65-74 years

6.2% of the Shire's population are aged 65-74, with Berowra, Cherrybrook and Waitara having the lowest percentage with 4.1%, 4.7% and 4.5% respectively. Carlingford has the highest percentage with 10.0 per cent followed by Epping North with 9.0 per cent.

### 75-84 years

The presence of residential aged care facilities and retirement villages significantly affects these statistics. The suburbs with the lowest percentage of people in this age group are Berowra and Hornsby Heights with 2.5% and 2.4% respectively, with 4.9% being the average for Hornsby Shire.

Castle Hill has a significantly higher percentage of people in this age group with 13.8% possibly due to a high number of age-specific

retirement accommodations, the majority of which is low or independent care. Castle Hill and Hornsby have the greatest numbers of people in this age category.

### **85 years and over**

This age group represents only 2.2 per cent of the total Hornsby Shire population; 1,686 people. However, it is the group most in need of support services. Berowra Heights, Hornsby Heights and Westleigh have the smallest percentages with 0.4 per cent, 0.5 per cent and 0.4 per cent respectively. Castle Hill again has by far the greatest percentage with 13.6 per cent (761 people), with many being accommodated in residential aged care facilities.

### **Current Status**

There are several causes of isolation in older people including being disconnected with neighbourhoods either through working, looking after grandchildren, or recently retired. Also over half of the people who live alone in Hornsby are over the age of 55 and have a potential to become isolated. Older people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds may also be isolated due to language barriers, awareness of support services, lack of culturally appropriate information on existing services and transport difficulties.

As people move into the frailer aged groups, knowledge of and access to services such as domestic assistance, personal care, and transport to social and health services, home modification and maintenance are essential.

In isolated rural areas transport and access to services are the biggest issues to remaining independent. However these services will be stretched to meet all the demands with the increases in the ageing population.

Council currently manages five (5) Leisure and Learning Centres across the Shire that offer a range of activities for older people including social networks and health and well being activities. Council also auspice a Home Modification service that enables older people to remain independent in their own homes.

### **Key Considerations**

The ageing population will continue to rise and the general population in approximately half of all suburbs across the shire is expected to rise in the coming years with the largest population rises expected in Hornsby. Small rises in the general population are

also expected in Dural, Waitara and Pennant Hills, due to increasing numbers of families moving to the areas and the increased number of dwellings

Social isolation and stress: - The effects of isolation impacts on health and mental wellbeing. The community may need localised services that are connected and joined up and access to health and lifestyle information.

Transport network (rail and bus networks) are currently not meeting the needs of residents. A strategic approach to lobby state government may be required.

## **Options**

Strategies to maintain the health and well being of older people in the Shire need to be addressed across the community.

Learning and Leisure Centres provide affordable meeting space to new and existing community groups for health and wellbeing programs for older people.

Further funding to assist the frail aged groups to remain independent will be required in the future

Housing Strategy that reflect the needs of the community such as affordable and accessible housing for all the community to be able to age, live and remain connected to their communities.

Organisational connectedness can be improved by developing partnerships with a range of non-government and government organisations to provide adequate and appropriate services to older people that will enhance social inclusion, support, ageing well, and make communities more age friendly.

A range of effective transport networks that are accessible

## **Conclusion**

It is important to recognise the vital role of older people as active, participatory citizens not simply as passive recipients of services. Older people make a significant contribution to many aspects of our community prosperity, cultural richness and well-being, providing a wealth of valuable experience, knowledge and skills.

The factors which contribute to ageing well and social inclusion include adequate income and material assets, appropriate and affordable housing, access to good quality health services, access to support and care according to need, access to transport, an age-

friendly built environment, community attitudes of respect and acceptance, community connections and social networks, feeling safe, and opportunities to participate in all aspects of community life.

## **Recommendations**

- Improvement to transport networks and a greater number of transport options
- Consider the changing needs of older people through the different phases of the life span
- Explore ways to improve social connectedness and inclusion of older persons within the community.