



Age Friendly Illawarra

Towards an Age Friendly Region
Consultation Report
May 2018

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1 ■ Introduction

Age Friendly environments allow people to stay active, connected and positively contribute to the economic, social, and cultural life of their community as they age. The Age-Friendly Illawarra Alliance (AFIA) has undertaken to develop a three year action plan that will encompass all eight domains from the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide. This includes outdoor spaces and the built environment, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication, and community support and health services.

An increasing number of cities and communities worldwide are endeavoring to meet the needs and enhance the quality of life of their older residents. The WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (the Network) was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide.

WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities members are a network with a common desire and commitment to encourage healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for their older members of the community. Supporting active ageing also enhances the quality of community life for all residents with the region.

Globally, by 2050 1 in 5 people will be 60 years or older. Regionally 16% of NSW residents (1.20 million people) were aged 65 years and over. Of these, 164,100 people were aged 85 years and over. Between 2010 and 2015 the number of people in NSW aged 65 years and over grew by 18%, reflecting the continuing ageing of the NSW population. In 2016 23.2% were aged 60 years and over in the Wollongong LGA and Shoalhaven has a higher proportion of persons at post retirement age than Regional NSW in 2016 with 34.3% were aged 60 years and over, compared to 27.2% respectively for Regional NSW.

2016 60 Years & Over



Members

- IRT Foundation – delivering IRT Group’s social impact, IRT Foundation works with the broad community across all stages of the ageing process to shift the negative stereotypes around ageing and create age-friendly communities.



- Edmiston Jones- a leader in the design of interactive spaces for a growing ageing population.



- Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation (ISJO) - the ISJO’s vision for the Illawarra is a confident, vibrant and productive region that maximises its potential and looks after its people and environment.



- Healthy Cities Illawarra - a community based non-profit organisation working to promote and improve the health, wellbeing, physical environments and quality of life of people in the Illawarra.



- University of Wollongong - through the Global Challenges stream, the Living Well Longer theme aims to examine how to live well throughout the course of our lives and ensure better quality of life in later years.



- NSW Family and Community Services - the Participation and Inclusion Directorate operate at a whole of community level to build stronger communities, focusing on participation and inclusion strategies and initiatives for particular population groups.



This report and Regional Age-Friendly 3 Year Plan has been constructed based on a review of the WHO Domains and global examples; feedback from Kiama Forum held in August 2016; research gathered from regional plans and initiatives and a consultation held in 2018. Further, information was also integrated from Wollongong City Council’s Ageing Plan 2018-2012 Consultation outcomes. The Consultation was implemented using three key methods of participant engagement: online, hand delivered and via email and phone. 35 participants responded to the survey. The process targeted both individuals and organisations.

This report details the themes and outcomes and proposed recommendation moving forward as to a model for age-friendly practice for the region.

2. WHO Domains & the Regional Perspective

WHO states, “Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (World Health Organization 2007b).

The WHO Age Friendly Cities Domains were used as a reference point for collating and evaluating the region’s needs. WHO provides a range of resources in relation to self-assessing the essential features of Age-Friendly Cities. This includes a checklist (World Health Organization 2007b, p6) and resources and research to support communities’ development of a healthy ageing framework (World Health Organization 2018b). Further, WHO’s Global Cities of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Network seeks to:

INSPIRE | change by showing what can be done and how it can be done;

CONNECT | cities and communities worldwide to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and experience; and

SUPPORT | cities and communities to find appropriate innovative and evidence-based solutions (World Health Organization 2018a)

AFIA is seeking membership to the Network on behalf of the Illawarra Shoalhaven. Although membership to the WHO Global Cities of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Network not an accreditation for age-friendliness, a submission displays the regions commitment assess the age-friendliness and work jointly with older people and across all sectors to create age-friendly environments. Further, membership provides the region with the credibility to share experiences and resources with other regions and communities globally.

By AFIA supporting the development of an age- friendly environment, the Illawarra Shoalhaven is working in alignment with the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (2016-2020).

The Strategy (2016 – 2020) has two goals:

- Five years of evidence-based action to maximize functional ability that reaches every person; and
- By 2020, establish evidence and partnerships necessary to support a Decade of Healthy Ageing from 2020 to 2030

www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide

www.who.int/ageing/publications/Age_friendly_cities_checklist

WHO EIGHT DOMAINS OF AGE FRIENDLY CITIES

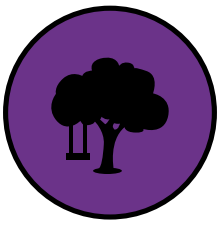
WHO identifies eight domains of age-friendly cities that overlap and impact on the age-friendliness of a city or region.

The framework for the domains has been used to generate a baseline assessment from the Illawarra Shoalhaven communities as to the age-friendly strengths and challenges within the region. Priorities and opportunities for collaboration have been identified and incorporated into a Model and Plan progressing age-friendly initiatives over the next three years.

The following is a summary of the feedback provided at the Kiama Forum in 2016 and the Consultation held in 2018, in relation to the Domains and the regional perspective.



Chart 1- Age Friendly Domains



A. OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Urban landscape and the built environment significantly impact on the age-friendliness of region. WHO states, “The outside environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older people and affect their ability to “age in place” (World Health Organization 2007b, p12). Personal mobility and a regions accessibility; safety from harm and security, and perception of safety strongly impact on an individual’s experiences of age friendliness within a region (World Health Organization 2016).

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- Intergenerational playgrounds needed
- Flexibility in control and planning instruments
- Better communication between stakeholders to enable better design
- Better use of Council resources
- Defined and accessible walking paths
- Better use of corporate and social responsibility to encourage new retiree’s to participate and volunteer
- Pedestrians prioritised over cars
- Education for seniors has to how to make the best use of outdoor equipment
- Walking distance considerations to town facilities from aged care facilities
- Longer crossing times at pedestrian crossings
- More grants to fund infrastructure
- Access to park facilities such as bubblers, shade etc
- Walkability around precincts
- Seating that encourages relaxation, not just benches
- Outdoor classes such as yoga; mediation; tai chi

www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide

Consultation Feedback

- Individuals rated outdoor spaces as fair to very good
- 59% participate in social clubs and activities, including senior specific groups (35%) and volunteers (45%)
- 75% of organisations rated outdoor spaces fair to excellent in the region
- Also highlighted was the need to create outdoor space that enables social gathering for both older people (sic) and people with disability

“Places for swimming, tai chi & community gardening”

The overarching theme from this Domain is the desire to connect accessibility, variety of activities to engage with and information about what is available in the community.



B. TRANSPORTATION

Transport is directly linked to health behaviour and social participation (World Health Organization 2007b, p14). On a regional scale, mobility is impacted by the quality and design of transportation infrastructure, and the accessibility and affordability of public transport (Government of Ontario 2018).

Regional considerations such as access to public transport, affordable transport, linkages between transport options; use of club and retirement village buses outside of the pace and driverless cars are all a part of the ongoing priorities and discussions in the region.

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- Learn from others - don't reinvent the wheel
- Understanding of difficulties of government
- Public transport and affordable private transport
- Burden on information services to help use online services
- Tapping into networks
- Getting better at helping people plan for their future- information and knowledge sharing
- Look internationally for good examples
- Volunteers to provide education
- Internal layout- seating and room to store walking/mobility aids/shopping

Consultation Feedback

- 75% individual respondents cited public transport as an issue that is hard to find.
- Individuals rated transport as very poor to fair rating

The theme from the Transportation domain is that availability and accessibility create barriers for older people in our community.

83% of organisations said transport is a three year priority and rated existing transport as very poor to good



C. HOUSING

Appropriate housing and accommodation options and their location and access to community and social services in influencing the independence and quality of life of older people (World Health Organization 2007b, p30).

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- House design enables
- Carers have a critical role
- Prefer to age in place where possible
- Safety and connection to services
- Infrastructure and government funding is needed
- Partnerships can help
- More forums and advisory groups that include the participation of older people
- Affordable housing
- Companions project
- Volunteers for research

Older people don't want to feel isolated & unseen. Spaces can encourage social activities & draw the community in.

Consultation Feedback

- Most individuals rated housing as fair
- Organisations ranked housing very poor to good

The location, options and availability of accommodation were cited as the main themes from the housing domain.



D. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Social participation provides significantly impacts on older peoples' ability to age in place (Government of Ontario 2018). Affordable, accessible, well communicated events and activities for social engagement, tailoring for ages and diverse needs, provide the framework to enhance social connections within the community.

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- Change underlying values to describe older people
- Terms of respect "older" "elder"
- Links to community programs
- Info packs for new residents as older people are not aware
- Utilise resident committees to share information, hold talks
- Facilitating social engagement and participation, eg: time bank
- Libraries or accessible activities
- Community organisations coming into communities/retirement villages to run activities
- Community champions to act as a catalyst
- Seniors week- better to spread over a longer period to introduce ongoing activities
- Access to transport is a barrier - examples in other countries

"we need participant led, accessible and flexible activities.....with information available in public places... not just on the net."

Consultation Feedback

- Social clubs and volunteering were the most common at 45% and 59%
- Good examples of senior exercise; The Hub and 60+ at Bundanon Trust
- 66% individuals would participate in further consultation re social participation
- 66% of organisations plan to focus on social participation over the next three years
- CALD is a priority; encouraged to go out and not be at home

42.6% individuals reported daily/weekly activity such as gardening, swimming, tai chi & volunteering.

The ability for people to source information and participate in social activities, and the benefits of continuing to engage in social life as people age was a significant theme for the Social Participation Domain. Further, many stakeholders were keen to connect providers, service and people in the community to improve the social outcomes for older people in the region.



E. RESPECT AND INCLUSION

Promoting awareness of the positive contribution, value and perception of the community of older people in the region.

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- GAPS:
- Positive images- visibility of older people in the media
- Recognition of older people as potential employees, contributors, experts and skilled people with experience
- Opportunities in the digital age- volunteer Skype; young people
- Education for the community and older people
- Need to know what people want to do
- Hard to reach people
- Use existing events when consulting with older people
- One stop shop for info
- Better connections outside- not just on one site
- Teaching/volunteering with older people; lack of face to face information/support
- Make existing events intergenerational; music festivals; school holiday programmes etc

“We need a positive narrative on our ageing population, focusing on opportunities & positive contribution”

Consultation Feedback

- Organisations rated broadly from poor to excellent
- Mutual respect and learning between the generations

Promoting the value and contributions and images of older people, and intergenerational opportunities were cited as a way of improving respect and Inclusion of older people in the region in this theme.



F. CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT

The availability and variety of opportunities to participate in decision making, and employment, volunteering and training opportunities to support opportunities for older people within the region.

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- Decision making at Local Council to ensure older people represent - AFIA to have mechanisms to make sure older people have a voice
- "Age friendly" assessment before development - merge consultation and decision making
- More research as to evidence based on fragmentation of families/communities
- Learn from networks
- Tap into the skills of older people
- Intergenerational connections - accessible built environment for everyone
- Connectivity has health benefits
- Need enablers; engagement; relationships, wheelchair access at public events
- Purposeful civic participation - wild rumpus; pedal power; five good friends; neighbours day; accommodation/uni

**Ideal experience:
being heard;
sense of purpose;
empowerment;
being visible**

Consultation Feedback

- 50% organisations are prioritising civic participation in the next three years
- Community Care Collective and Regional Forums are excellent networking opportunities for organisations
- Knowledge brokering
- AFIA should be encouraging stakeholders to talk to each other - providing opportunities online or in real events.
- Seniors Week probably has events where AFIA should have a presence
- Aged care facilities, particularly independent living, Neighborhood centres, Medical practitioners, charities are good sources of volunteers
- Create a forum asking seniors what their priorities are currently & their futures
- 66% of individuals rated opportunities good to very good

The community wants ways to engage and support older people so they can participate meaningfully in decision making.



G. COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

An effective regional communication system, with continued and widespread distribution of information supports the age-friendliness of the region. Planning and evaluating the reach to community members that inform them of events, services, programs and resources available in the community is essential.

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- Break down invisibility - communication and marketing needs to change
- Better use of existing infrastructure to connect people
- Harness experience and recognise ability that they can educate - not just academics
- My agedcare.com has no rollout/education, limited support, gap between technology and the user experience
- Establishing an effective online portal for sharing age friendly information
- Building apps with people
- Work with older people on an ongoing basis for education
- Make easy access to AFI - web presence/FB
- #agefriendly all resources to keep them central
- Price barriers limit opportunities for access
- Online/remote access to help
- Cyber security fears restricted use
- Finance industry communication to approach transition
- Engage more older people in school environs
- Create list of “champions” who support the goals and objectives of AFIA, including areas of expertise/support organisations
- Communicate safety of environment and community

Consultation Feedback

- Individuals are seeking meetings/communication “keeping the lines open”
- 33% wish to participate in communication and information
- Organisations rated communication lower
- 62.5% cited as poor to very poor
- 100% organisations cited communication as a future priorities - newsletters; digital literacy; education
- 85% would participate in workshops in the future in relation to communication and information

This domains highlights the need for development of various communication mediums with older people, accommodating different needs and promoting a positive image.

ACCESSIBILITY

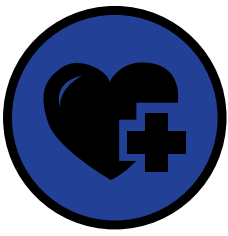
- User tested, user friendly systems - an opportunity to deliver training while testing
- Use of hearing loops and visual cues
- Printed material is readable - font
- Voice command print read material
- Make communication accessible - free Wi-Fi
- Seniors card - how to communicate with people without an email address

EMPOWERMENT

- Rethink the way individuals view themselves and their ability to contribute
- Create channels for people to have more influence and say over their community - upstream decision making
- Build role of AFIA as advocate/educator
- Empower and enable older people to be part of the conversation, especially with forms of technology

INNOVATION

- Intergenerational communication eg older people reading books to kids; high school students doing assessment within aged care facilities
- Personal digital noticeboards in homes; promote volunteering/ activities/bus timetables etc
- Virtual reality to connect socially with friends; community nurse etc
- Google maps layer for age friendly activates



H. COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

Adequate access to all levels of health and community support that promote, maintain and restore health.

Kiama Forum Suggestions

- Change perception/mindset of ageing - have fun and play
- Listen to older people
- Aged residential buildings are often located in isolated places - how to access networks
- Collaborate to various groups make some form of information sharing tool
- Older people may struggle with IT and there are services however older people don't know how to access them
- Reform age/disability processes
- Awareness on how to access and navigate
- Use infrastructure better eg swimming pools are quieter during the day- let older people use them
- Innovative approaches to participation
- Participant led programs; buddy programs; linking older people with the younger generation
- Special events
- Use club buses as transport
- Some individuals like to do their own thing
- Access to services sometimes difficult and costly
- Technology and social isolation
- Cultural awareness and appropriate services- one size does not fit all
- Changed cultural practices IT- younger mentors/teaching older people

Consultation Feedback

- Assumption because of the way you look
- "Nursing home" rather than "retirement villages"
- 58% of individuals cite needs are met - good rating
- 50% of organisations indicated this is a priority

A flexible community and health service to support the diversity in the community was the theme of this Domain.

**We need more
Community Home
Support Program & Home
Care Packages. At present
there are too many people
in Australia waiting
for a package.**

3 ■ Themes from the Consultation

In a review baseline assessment across the key themes related to the challenges and benefits of establishing meaningful and sustainable ways for the Illawarra Shoalhaven to address issues jointly, with the purpose of having better engagement and outcomes for aged members of the community.

Current priorities for the region and interest in the community in achieving joint goals were focused upon as achievable areas where the community is invested in the outcome and a joint desire to achieve outcomes for a more age friendly community.

The determinants of active ageing overlap and intersect (World Health Organization 2007b, p9). The key themes centered on three key elements- Information and Communication, Collaboration and Connection.

The WHO Age-Friendly domains provide a framework for a region to achieve better outcomes for older residents. The challenge for the Illawarra Shoalhaven region, is how to achieve joint outcomes across the four local government areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven.

Application to the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities requires the Mayor to provide a commitment to Age-Friendly principles. Further, evidence is required as to attest to evidence of collaborative planning and inter-sectoral implementation.

For a regional application, it is therefore recommended that the four local government areas submit a joint commitment, through the ISJO, to the 3 year regional plan. The Declaration's aim would be to:

- Build on shared strength, share knowledge and connect communities.
- Create clear communication and a model of age friendly practice
- Assist broad capacity building and networks across the Region
- Support knowledge sharing

Further by inviting services, programs, and private providers and organisations also be invited to participate in the declaration, this reinforces the impact for initiatives that intersect across the Region.

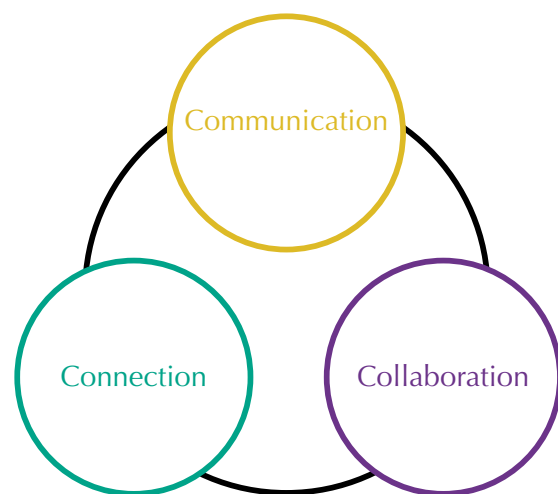


Chart 2 - Themes of the Consultation

4. Proposed Model

Establishing an Age-Friendly Model for the Region is based on identifying, “policies, services, setting and structures support and enable people to age actively” (World Health Organization 2007b, p5). A cohesive age-friendly model can also fulfill a role of systemic advocacy and policy role for specific purpose within a region.

To date, there is no accreditation in evaluated, successful models of age friendliness globally, however there are essential features and a checklist that cities and therefore regions can follow to benchmark and improve their age-friendly status/experience for the community. (World Health Organization, 2007a). Recommendations for Implementation are provided in Part 2 in the 3 Year Age- Friendly Action Plan.

The proposed model for the region is designed to address the three principal joint priorities of the region. Further, the proposed model also overlaps with all of the eight domains, however provides a focus for joint achievement regionally over the next three years.

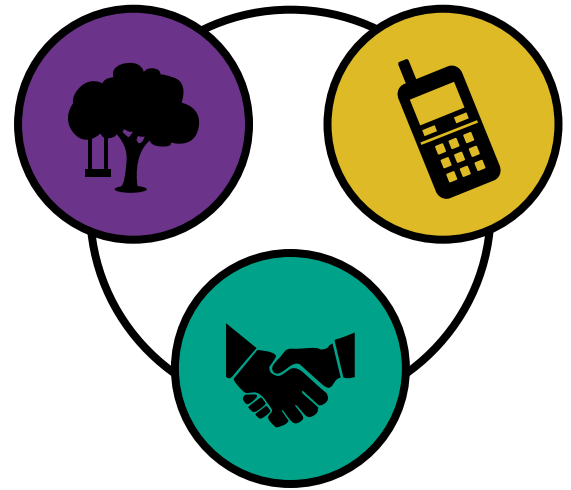


Chart 3- Proposed Model for the Region



COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

The lack of centralized information and precise information prevents cohesive regional relationships. The method in which to communicate to older people in the community has also not been ascertained, in terms of the best way in which to reach people to receive and use information.

Improving and quality, format and reach of information and communication across the region has been identified as a priority. The benefits of a regional focus are that it will:

- Increases the quality and effectiveness of information sharing
- Collaboration builds a culture of mutual respect and inclusiveness
- Shared ownership of improving information increases success the likelihood of long term success
- Accurate information underpins opportunities for access and inclusion for people in the community

Initiatives that that harness the connections and contacts would provide a mutual portal of services, events and opportunities for older people on the community to engage. Further, AFIA has also developed a website that has information and communication portal, where community information could be shared for those with digital access.

Strategies such as centralizing this information electronically, further networking events and opportunities to meet and work collaboratively in regional initiatives would be valuable tool in increasing knowledge and engagement across the region. The sustainability and reliability keeping the information up to date would be an issue. Therefore sourcing funding for the development and maintenance and a regional agreement in regards to the most beneficial source and format of information is recommended.

Ensuring opportunities for the engagement and participation of older people in the decision making process, and the testing of communication initiatives would be critical in determining the best methods to communicate to older residents in the community and the way in which they receive and utilise information.

Gathering data and commencing research in relation to this would be beneficial to the Region, as a planning and implementation tool as to how to reach older people on the community, now and into the future. The digital experience has its limitations in relation to the user's ability to access, and navigate the system. As access to information and support is increasingly being funneled into the digital space, older people who are unfamiliar or who have limited access are excluded from way in which information is delivered.

The Forum in Kiama in August 2016, was highly valued and very well attended. Ongoing networking events with a theme, and a focus on sharing and connecting knowledge, creating communities of practice is recommended.



SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

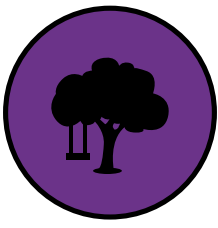
Strong social connections and support have a correlation with well-being and good health as people in the community age (World Health Organization 2007b, p38).. The capacity to participate, transport and getting information about activities impacts on older peoples' ability to participate (World Health Organization 2007b, p38).

Social participation refers to the opportunities and engagement of people in leisure, social, educational and spiritual events and activities (Cachadinha, Pedro and Fialho 2011). By ensuring that participation of older people at events; seeking their views as to their needs and desires; consistent outreach with people in the community that are isolated, social connection and opportunities to engage significantly increase the age friendliness of the Region.

Information about transport options, accessibility, affordability and support available once at the activities would improve the engagement of older people that may be hesitant to engage (South Australian Government 2012).

Examples were provided as to best practice models that provided older people with connection such as volunteering; clubs and churches.

Social isolation is a significant risk factor to public health in the community (Wilson and Moulton 2010). Regional research into successful models of connecting people, and providing members of the community to opportunities to engage is recommended.



OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Good urban design can play a major role in allowing seniors to age in place and remain active (Australian Local Government Association 2006). Inclusive urban design and consideration that moves seating and consideration for outdoor spaces beyond functionality is considered best practice in relation to achieving progress in relation to age friendliness. Further consideration as to “how connected and comfortable” seating is and supporting the user to “connect and engage with the environment” (Barron 2015).

The research in relation to intergenerational play and the benefits to the community and health and numerous (Wang, Taylor and Sun 2018). Intergenerational play spaces encompasses best practice design strategies in the areas of nature, inclusion and fitness, communities can bring adults and children together, create parks that help families reconnect with the outdoors and with one another.

Mapping the spaces and researching intergenerational opportunities, linking to Council priorities in recommended improving the opportunities for greater inclusion.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Region, (Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven local government areas), has a higher population of people age 65+ than the state and national average. As a popular retirement location, projections estimate the population of older people is expected to rise dramatically over the next few decades. The regions design and use of public spaces will be under greater scrutiny, as older people utilise those spaces.

The World Health Organisation identifies lack of appropriate and regular seating as a barrier for people that are aged to participate in the community (World Health Organization 2007b, p18). AFIA has commenced a region-wide, age-friendly retail and business precinct project to support people in the region to age positively by:

- Recognising the wide range of capacities and resources among older people through the Ambassador program
- Anticipating and responding flexibly to ageing-related needs and preferences as consumers of services in business
- Promoting older people’s inclusion in and contribution to all areas of community life
- Benefiting businesses commercially by attracting and retaining loyal aged consumers, as well as increasing the skills and awareness of staff to the needs of older people
- Sensitise, educate and partner with retail precincts to increase and improve the participation, and inclusion of aged people in the region
- Provide information to retailers as to actions to adopt to increase the positive experiences of the aged in the community, and partner with them to consider and improve the consumer experience of their premises

5 ■ Summary

The Age Friendly Illawarra Alliance has consulted extensively with a broad group of stakeholder to critically assess the age friendliness of the Illawarra Shoalhaven.

An analysis of the data collected through this process has indicated three priority domains the Alliance will priorities over the next three years. The domains have been selected for their overlap with the other domains, for the potential to create outcomes and for the leadership of the regional champions in these areas.

The Age Friendly Illawarra Alliance has developed a three year action plan detailing activities across the three selected domains of Outdoor Spaces and Building, Social Participation and Communication and Information.

This Regional Age-Friendly 3 Year Plan implementation plan, with KPI's will be delivered in relation to the proposed model in Part 2 of this report.

www.who.int/ageing/GSAP-Summary

World Health Organization 2018a, Age-Friendly World: About the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, viewed 1/11/2017 <<https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>>

World Health Organization 2018b, Ageing and life-course: Data and research, viewed 1/11/2017 <<http://www.who.int/ageing/data-research/en/>>