

10 EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNITY'S LIVEABILITY

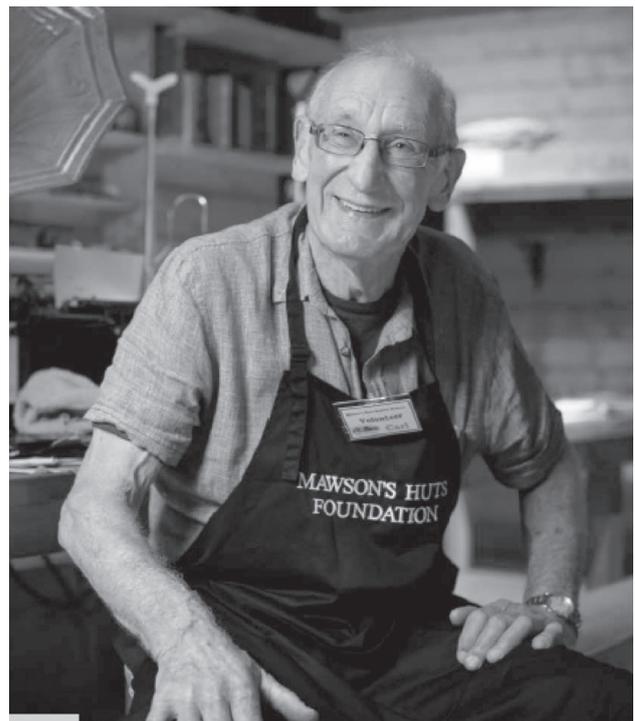
1. Remove ageist language and imagery from council documents and advertising.

Ageist language is ingrained in Australian culture, from birthday cards to everyday language. Images of older people who are crippled, hunched, lonely, home-bodies and generally 'over the hill' are constantly portrayed through marketing, reinforcing community expectations of what it means to be 'older'.

The majority of older people are active, happy and their life experiences have enabled them to identify who they are and what they want to do. Though physical and cognitive decline may occur, it does not do so as soon as someone reaches 65 years old and does not reduce a person's value. People well into their 90s, though they may have changed ability, still participate in community life and enrich the world around them.

Stopping negative age stereotypes starts with your local council.

Any language or imagery used by your council around ageing should be positive and reflect the diversity of older people. Avoid terms like 'the elderly' and 'the aged', and never refer to an older person you don't know as 'love', 'darl' or 'sweetie'. Try to refer to groups of people as they would describe themselves. You should work with your community to identify what this is. As a starting point, COTA Tasmania aims to use language such as 'older Tasmanians' or 'older people'.



2. Contact and support existing community groups and programs.

There are lots of groups and programs already running in Tasmanian communities that promote participation, social inclusion and volunteering. These groups often save government thousands of dollars a year by facilitating social networks and supporting people in the community. Many councils already support these programs and it's a great way to tap into existing resources to promote liveability.

Some ways that you can support existing community groups and programs include:

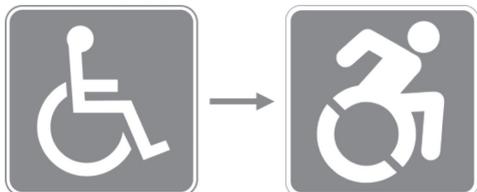
- Invite group members to be part of your Liveability Committee, community liveability assessment or provide feedback on your Liveable Community action plan.
- Conduct an audit of your community to identify the different groups and programs currently being run and share this with the community.
- Offer council facilities, human resources or transport for group activities or events at reduced rates or for free.
- Promote group activities and events through council networks.
- Sponsor group activities or events, or offer to organise relevant guest speakers to attend sessions.
- Attend groups to discuss current issues in council that are relevant to them to include them in the process and receive feedback.
- Host events that bring different groups together and promote social inclusion.
- Encourage groups to contact the council if they have issues to raise or would like support.
- Develop a community groups and programs directory and calendar to raise awareness about what's on in your community.
- Encourage local businesses and services to lease out their rooms to community groups and activities in slow periods at reduced rates.



3. Improve your community's walkability.

Having a community in which people can easily and safely walk from their home to transport, services or shopping areas promotes inclusion and health. Some of the simpler ways to ensure this include:

- Ensure paths around residential and shopping areas are clear of trees or bushes that extend into the path, leaf litter and obstacles, and are well maintained.
- Provide ample seating, some with arm rests to help people get in and out, throughout the community so people have plenty of opportunities to rest. Consider discretely modifying existing infrastructure, such as walls, bike stands or bollards, to create new seating options (see the *Alternative Age-friendly Handbook* in the *Liveable Communities Resources* document). Also consider installing shelter over some of these seats.
- Always have seating and shelter available at bus stops, which are accessible by a path.
- Signage for public toilets, city centres, essential services, public transport and information should be clearly marked throughout the community.
- Keep public toilets well maintained and clean, or encourage local businesses to open up their toilets for non-customers.
- Provide adequate rubbish bins throughout the community to reduce litter (and trip hazards) on pathways.
- Increase the length of time that the 'green man' is displayed at pedestrian crossings at traffic lights so pedestrians do not feel pressured to cross quickly and risk injury.
- Make street signage non-discriminatory – why do pedestrians signs need to label the people that cross the road as 'elderly' when people of all ages are likely cross that road? Maybe signs for disabled people could be active, as many of them are?



4. Develop, promote and support programs that foster intergenerational relationships.

A Liveable Community brings together people of all ages to foster respect and inclusion. Programs that promote intergenerational relationships can significantly reduce ageist attitudes as both younger and older people get to know and learn to appreciate the skills and knowledge of other generations (see *What Age Gap? Building Intergenerational Relationships* in the *Liveable Community Resources* document).

Your council can facilitate intergenerational relationships by:

- Supporting and promoting existing community programs that foster intergenerational relationships.
- Providing information to existing groups and programs about ways to engage different generations and the benefits of this.
- Encouraging groups to develop intergenerational programs by giving these priority in council grants.
- Working with schools and community groups to identify barriers to developing intergenerational programs.

5. Provide information about council and community services, events and activities so older people can access it.

One of the biggest frustrations for older Tasmanians is finding information about services, events and activities in their community, particularly as information is moved online (see *Digital technology and older Tasmanians* fact sheet).

Council can keep older members of their community informed about services, events and activities by:

- Providing all information in hard copy in addition to online.
- Ensuring hard copy information is printed in large, clear, contrasting font (contact VisAbility Tasmania about guidelines around this).
- Distributing information in services and areas that older people frequent. Examples include doctor's surgeries, pharmacies, grocery stores, post offices and community venues.
- Establishing a council mailing list for people who would like to receive information by post rather than email.

6. Improve local employers understanding of older workers.

Many older Tasmanians face age discrimination at work as they near retirement, and some are forced out of employment before they want to. This is because some employers hold ageist stereotypes that people begin to lose physical and cognitive capacity as they approach retirement. COTA Tasmania has heard of instances of people in their 40s feeling as though they have been pushed out of their workplace because of their age.

Older employees have a wealth of work and life experience that all employers should value. In some cases, people do require up-skilling, particularly as digital technology becomes a greater part of the workplace. Everyone is capable of acquiring these skills if given support to do so.

Many older people prefer to be able to transition out of the workforce as they approach retirement. This may be in the form of reduced hours or changing to a job requiring less responsibility. It is during this time that smart employers will recognise the importance of ensuring that invaluable experience and knowledge from older workers is passed on to younger, less experienced workers through mentoring.

Council can support older person employment by:

- Including members of the business community to be part of the Liveability Committee and provide feedback about the Liveable Community's action plan.
- Educating employers about issues older workers face in employment, such as transitioning out of the workforce and mentoring opportunities.



7. Enforce parking regulations to prevent people from illegally parking in disability parks.

Many disabled parking permit holders said in state-wide consultation that disability parking is often not available in shopping and community areas due to illegal parking in these spots. Council can enforce parking regulations to prevent this from occurring.

It may also be useful to install 5 minute parking spots around services and shopping areas for people who are not disabled but who need to collect someone who has poor mobility.



8. Raise awareness about community issues and lobby the state government.

Many of the aspects of life in Tasmania are out of the control of local council, but councils still have the opportunity to ensure members of their community are supported by state and federal policies.

Councils can determine what their community wants to change by consulting directly with them and encouraging feedback about certain issues. Publicising these issues can help raise awareness and put pressure on state government to act. This in turn may cause state government to lobby federal government for change in these issues.

Some policy issues that affect older people in your community may include:

- Ageist workers compensation laws that deny income replacement for workers over the age of 65, instilling employer discrimination in the workplace.
- Availability of specialist and allied health services in the community.
- Access to palliative care in regional areas.
- Availability of aged care services.
- Availability of affordable and appropriate housing options.



9. Host events for members of the community to meet and talk with councillors and council staff.

Community members want to be able to meet with their local council members to discuss issues that affect them. Council hosted events, such as coffee chats or community walks, can provide an informal opportunity to facilitate this. These may include people who are randomly invited to attend, specific groups or individuals who have enquired to the council.

If these events are held in the community, rather than at council chambers, it also gives council members the opportunity to identify areas in the community that may require upgrading or maintenance. For example, a walk around a community block with members of the community and police may help identify areas that are unsafe or poorly maintained. These issues can then be addressed through council and community collaboration.

10. Work with other councils to share ideas and resources.

A number of Tasmanian councils have adopted ageing plans or strategies to make their communities more age-friendly (see *Liveable Communities Resources* document for a list of these). Both Clarence and Burnie councils have taken an extra step and become part of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, and have access to a wealth of information and advice through this Network. Collaboration and sharing of knowledge between councils will help to create a unified approach to improving Tasmania's liveability.

