

4. Development of an Ageing Strategy

The Bega Valley Shire population is ageing and it is timely that Council develop a strategy so it is best placed to manage the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population.

Group Manager, Community and Relationships

BACKGROUND

10 Like many other regional areas, Bega Valley Shire has an ageing population. Currently more than 30% of the Shire is aged over 55 years, this number is expected to grow to more than 40% by 2022 (2006 ABS Census Data), making the Bega Valley one of the most rapidly ageing areas in the State.

In 2002, the Federal Government's Department of Health and Ageing launched the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia as a broad based framework to address emerging issues associated with an ageing population. In 2007 the NSW Government released the Ageing 2030 Report, reinforcing the need to address issues of a rapidly ageing population.

20 At the Local Government level, the ageing of the population will pose key challenges and opportunities. The development of an Ageing Strategy, with a whole of Council approach, will enable Council to articulate the role it plays, particularly in planning for the needs of current and future generations. It will also be valuable in highlighting the areas of responsibility that fall to other tiers of Government, the community and individuals. The strategy will also form a key action component of the Council's Community Strategic Plan which is currently being prepared.

In 2005 Council hosted a major Social Planning Conference, this was a great success and provided the platform to develop the 2006-2011 Social Plan – this document was seen as best practice by the Department of Local Government.

Local identity, Ross Williams, recently approached Council with some concepts for workshops and a forum. Mr Williams has been working with Council staff to refine this program and provide a link with local service providers and potential speakers for future programs.

30 It is proposed that a similar, focussed forum to the Social Planning Conference be used to focus on Ageing in the Bega Valley and that this is investigated as the staging platform for the development of an Ageing Strategy for the Shire. This will provide the opportunity to attract expertise on all aspects of ageing to the Bega Valley to better inform the strategy.

ISSUES

Policy

Council has some strategic policy documents that address issues around ageing, including the Social Plan 2006-2011 and Local Environment Plan, the development of a strategy specifically addressing an ageing population will better equip Council moving forward.

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Economic

There are future economic opportunities for the Shire in meeting the challenges of an ageing population.

Consultation

Consultation with the community and key stakeholders, both Government and non Government, will be a critical aspect in the development of the strategy. The Eurobodalla Shire Council is developing an Ageing Strategy – it is expected some cross-fertilisation of issues, research and options will emerge.

Financial

Funds have been identified in the Community Services Budget for the 2008/2009 that can be held over to 2009/2010 to develop a proposal for the Ageing Forum and to identify external funding opportunities to make the forum cost neutral to Council. Attendees would contribute in a similar way conference attendees pay for attendance. This model has been used successfully by the Council with the Social Planning conference and the Library conference.

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Resources (including staff)

Community service staff will develop the proposal for the Ageing forum. External funding will be sought for the coordination and implementation aspects of the forum and the development of the strategy.

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Strategic

The Ageing Strategy will become a significant informer document to the Community Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that Council are prepared for the ageing population and the implications that this brings not only for Council, but for the Shire as a whole.

The development of a strategy going forward, that will provide strategic direction and develops actions which will enable Council to plan and provide for current and future generations of older people living in the Bega Valley Shire, with an Ageing forum as the first step in that process.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council support the development of an Ageing Strategy.
2. That Council support the concept of a forum on ageing as the first step in the development of this strategy.
3. That identified funds in the community services be revoted to seed fund the development of the Ageing Strategy.