

Enquiries: Deborah Stanton

Our Reference: M02/7303

Your Reference:

5 November 2002

Dr Margot Kerley
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Ageing
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Dr Kerley

Submission to Standing Committee on Ageing Inquiry -long-term strategies to address the ageing of the Australian population over the next 40 years

With the first of the "*Baby Boomers*" (those born between 1946 and 1964) about to enter their retirement years, the Western Australian Local Governments of Claremont, Cottesloe, Mosman Park, Nedlands, Peppermint Grove, and Subiaco have begun planning how they can best influence an environment that will support positive ageing in place.

Together these councils comprise the Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC). WESROC is a voluntary organisation comprised of an Executive of the six Chief Executive Officers, and a Board, which includes the six Mayors or Shire Presidents. While each local government authority is independent, WESROC provides a mechanism to work cooperatively in order to optimise resources and increase customer value to the residents living within the region.

In 2002, WESROC commissioned the preparation of a Regional Seniors' Needs Study). The findings of this study were presented in a report entitled "Building Strong Communities through Positive Ageing", which was launched in October, 2002 by Julie Bishop, MP. A copy of this Report is attached for the Committee's information and retention.

The Consultants for this WESROC study were Lee Phillips and Associates. Dr Lee was the inaugural Director of the Office of Seniors Interests and is currently a member of the Active Ageing Taskforce. Ms Phillips was formerly Deputy Director of the Office of Seniors Interests. A team consisting of representatives of the WESROC Councils and the Office of Seniors Interests guided the project, which was coordinated by the City of Nedlands.

Positive ageing promotes choices for seniors in areas such as lifestyle and continued learning. Positive ageing also emphasises on-going community involvement of seniors through meaningful and valued roles in society.

The WESROC Study had three main aims, i.e.:

1. to identify what sort of community today's seniors want and what sort of community "baby boomers" want as they become tomorrow's seniors;
2. to explore options for the WESROC councils to act in partnership, as well as individually, to ensure a coordinated approach to planning for residents across the region to encourage positive ageing in place and
3. to explore options for Councils to link with State and Commonwealth governments and the private sector to ensure a coordinated approach to planning for the future.

The twelve Priority Areas used to shape *Time on Our Side: A Five Year Plan for Western Australia's Maturing Population 1998-2003* (Office of Seniors Interests) were addressed as part of the study.

The most important part of this study was to gather a wide variety of views and ideas about all aspects of positive ageing, including housing preferences, transport, health, recreation, employment (both paid and voluntary), community involvement, safety and general lifestyle issues. Opportunities provided to gather input have included a community survey, displays at Shopping Centres in the region in conjunction with the Department for Community Development, Seniors Interests and Community Forums held at various venues across the region during March and April.

These forums enabled local residents and service providers, many of whom are attending this launch, to have a direct say in shaping the type of community they want in coming years. Topics considered included:

- Positive ageing
- Creating an "age-friendly" community
- Care needs and health
- Active ageing (including recreation, volunteering and employment)
- Accommodation and housing (including town planning considerations)
- Environment (including safety, transport and facilities)
- Baby boomers: lifestyle planning for the retirement years

STATISTICS AND THE REPORT AT A GLANCE

- The report is based on a community development model of positive ageing and developing age-friendly communities rather than a medical model. It takes a whole-of-life and whole-of-community approach
- The Western Suburbs Regional Group of Councils (WESROC) has a combined population of 64,270 in an area of 42.4 square kilometres.
- The WESROC population is currently older than that of the Perth Metropolitan area (15.2% of population over 65 compared to 11.3% for Perth Metro – 2001 Census)
- Perth Metropolitan and WESROC regions will both have a big increase in 55-74+ years age group as baby boomers age however growth in the number of people over 75 years will be higher for the Perth Metropolitan region than for WESROC.
- Generic and specific needs established in the study include:

Generic needs

- A sense of community
- A need for information
- Age integration not segregation

Specific needs

- Volunteering opportunities
- Lifelong learning
- Recreation
- Public transport
- Paths
- Public safety
- Community services rather than facilities and infrastructure

The recommendations have been structured for implementation at different levels to enable collaborative and localised planning, i.e.:

- WESROC strategic
- WESROC and/or individual Local Government Authorities policy & strategic
- Regional operational
- Local Government Authority policy and/or operational

The Regional Seniors' Needs Study has provided the basis for WESROC to use positive and active ageing initiatives to build stronger communities and demonstrate leadership in local government initiatives at state and national levels.

I hope you find the information in this submission and accompanying report of use in your consideration of the long-term strategies required to address the ageing of the Australian population over the next 40 years at all levels of government.

Yours sincerely

DR SHAYNE SILCOX
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER