

19 March 2009

Attention: Jane.Thompson@aph.gov.au

Senator Helen Polley
Chair
Senate Inquiry into Aged Care
S.G.60. Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Polley

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee – Aged Care Inquiry –
Questions on Notice**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further information in response to the question about local government's thinking on planning for long term infrastructure needs, particularly in light of expected peaks and drops over time, in the size of the aged population requiring aged care facilities.

The nature of community and residential aged care continues to change as standards and community expectations change. Therefore the demand for residential aged care could fluctuate in quantum and nature both before and after aged population peaks by changes such as:

- Greater availability and range of community care
- Improvements in assistive technology
- Improvements in delay of onset or progress of dementia

Local government in Victoria believes that planning for residential aged care should be viewed in the context of the need for strategies to improve community care. In fact, the aged care planning system should be re-focussed on supporting people to continue to live at home as its first priority.

Local government has two key planning roles – as the Responsible Authority in assessing planning permit applications and as Planning Authority in the preparation of the Planning Scheme for each municipality.

As there is no Government financial assistance towards the construction of residential aged care facilities, it is likely that they will continue to be built only to comply with current regulations, and with a limited life cycle. This does allow for redevelopment as buildings reach the end of their life, and as needs change.

However, as the pressure increases for more diverse, mixed use compact cities to support reduced car dependency and harmful greenhouse emissions, it is more likely that there will be market incentives for re-use of buildings taking full life-cycle analysis into account and in time assessing embedded energy as well as operational energy consumption. The current construction materials and design preferences may well need to change to meet these objectives.

Although less than 20% of Victorian councils are residential aged care facility providers themselves, councils are also significant providers of the infrastructure necessary to support older people to live successfully in their communities – footpaths, lighting, seating, public toilets, recreation facilities, meeting spaces. The costs of providing and maintaining the level of safe and supportive, fit for purpose infrastructure in local communities, are disproportionately borne by local government, creating a management and resource challenge. It also creates inequities as some of the smaller rural areas have the least resources to provide for the level of amenity required.

The MAV contact person is Kaye Owen should you have any queries about this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rob Spence', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

ROB SPENCE
Chief Executive Officer