Loxton Waikerie
Ageing Well Strategy

Government of South Australia

District Council of Loxton Waikerie

Healthy Environs

CONTENTS

Loxton Waikerie Ageing Well Strategy 2025-2031

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

PURPOSE 4

CONCEPTS OF HEALTHY AGEING 5

POPULATION TRENDS 7

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 8

OUR STRATEGY 11

ACTION PLAN 12

TABLE AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Development Process 4

Figure 2: Age-friendly city topic areas (Source WHO) 6

Figure 3: Demographic Statistics for DCLW 7

Image 1: Community Consultation at Waikerie Bowling Club, February 2025. 8

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the first people of the River Murray and Mallee Region as the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which we meet and pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW) Ageing Well Strategy 2025–2031 (the Strategy) sets a clear vision for creating an age-friendly community that promotes independence, inclusion, and quality of life for older residents. With nearly half (47.5%) of the district's population aged 50 and over, the Strategy addresses the growing and evolving needs of this demographic, while aligning with South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 (the Plan).

The Strategy development was underpinned by five key phases: research and analysis, stakeholder engagement, strategy development, drafting, and finalisation. Extensive community consultation through surveys, interviews, and workshops informed the direction of the Strategy, revealing both community strengths and areas for improvement.

Key community assets for ageing well in our region include strong social connections, volunteerism, and valued local facilities. However, challenges were also identified, including limited housing diversity and affordability, insufficient public and community transport, inadequate health services (particularly in Waikerie), and barriers to accessing aged care information and services.

The Strategy is structured around three strategic priorities:

Home and Community - Enhancing housing options, affordability, and ageing-in-place supports.

Meaningful Connections - Strengthening neighbourhood ties, volunteering, and social engagement.

Navigating Change - Improving resilience, access to services, digital literacy, and transitions in later life.

To achieve its vision, the Strategy outlines a five-year action plan, defining DCLW's roles across advocacy, service provision, partnership, leadership, and more. It emphasises collaboration with stakeholders across sectors and builds on existing community strengths, aiming to ensure older residents can age well in place.

This Strategy is supported by funding from Office for Ageing Well through the Age Friendly SA Grant Program and represents a long-term commitment by the DCLW to create a liveable, inclusive, and sustainable future for all residents as they age.

PURPOSE

The District Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW) is located on the River Murray in the Riverland of South Australia. The area spans from the Blanchetown bridge in the west to the Victorian border in the east. The main service centres are the townships of Loxton and Waikerie, which are complemented by many smaller towns and communities.

The district is known for its significant contributions to agriculture and horticulture, playing a crucial role in the national output of food and beverages. Local industries also engage in value-adding activities such as processing, packaging, storing, and distributing food and beverages within and from the local area. Tourism is another important sector, with increasing and coordinated efforts evident in recent years.

The DCLW is dedicated to fostering a strong sense of community among its residents and enhancing their quality of life. With 47.5% of residents aged 50 years and above, tailored initiatives and recreational activities to suit all age groups are needed. Acknowledging this demographic shift, the DCLW is dedicated to preparing for the ongoing needs of a growing ageing population.

The DCLW has engaged Healthy Environs to undertake community engagement and develop an Ageing Well Strategy for the Council area. The Ageing Well Strategy will identify opportunities for an 'age-friendly' region and outline actions to address the community's evolving needs.

The Healthy Environs team collaborated with DCLW staff, Elected Members, stakeholders, and the local community to deliver a holistic, inclusive, and effective strategy that builds on the existing Council's assets, services, strengths, and local environment.

The Ageing Well Strategy project is supported by an Age Friendly SA grant from the Office for Ageing Well, Department of Human Services.

A diagrammatic overview of the Strategy development process is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Strategic Development Process

CONCEPTS OF HEALTHY AGEING

Supporting Healthy Ageing

A literature review on international and Australian healthy ageing recommendations and an analysis of local health and demographic data informed the development of this Strategy. Review of state and local plans and strategies enabled alignment with existing initiatives and guidelines. The District Council of Loxton Waikerie Ageing Well Strategy Research Report provides full detail.

Concepts of Healthy Ageing

Healthy ageing involves maintaining good physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing as we age. This continuous journey can start at any age, not just in older adulthood. By focusing on key health areas throughout life, individuals can build a strong foundation for long-term health and vitality.

Several crucial areas of health contribute to healthy ageing: physical, mental and social. Physical health involves regular exercise, a balanced diet, and preventive healthcare measures. Mental health encompasses activities that stimulate the mind, emotional wellbeing, and stress management. Social health includes maintaining relationships, participating in community activities, and staying engaged with society.

Addressing these areas can enhance an individual's quality of life and promote longevity. It is essential for people of all ages to adopt healthy habits and engage in practices that support their overall well-being. Creating a supportive environment and accessing resources that foster healthy ageing are vital steps in this journey[1].

[1]CDC Healthy Aging. https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-aging/about/index.html

CONCEPTS OF HEALTHY AGEING

International Context

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines healthy ageing as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age[2].

At a community level, the supportive environment concept has been defined by guidelines such as the Global Age-friendly Cities (WHO). This document defines age-friendly cities as inclusive and accessible environments that promote active ageing by optimising opportunities for health, participation, security, and lifelong learning. Active ageing determinants include economic, social, behavioural, personal factors, physical environment, and health and social services. These determinants impact an older person's ability to age well.

Figure 2 summarises WHO's topic and focus areas for an age-friendly city and illustrates how an age-friendly city can foster social inclusion, respect, and participation by providing accessible public spaces, transportation, and housing while promoting community engagement, safety, and health services.

South Australian Context

The engagement framework developed by Healthy Environs aligns with the three South Australian strategic priorities[3]:

1. Home and community
2. Meaningful connections
3. Navigating change

These priorities are part of the broader South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 and have been integrated into the engagement framework to ensure that the local community's needs are met while also aligning with state-level goals.

Figure 2: Age-Friendly City Topic Areas (Source WHO)

[2]Decade of healthy ageing: baseline report. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

[3]South Australian's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025, SA Health – Government of South Australia.

POPULATION TRENDS

International

According to the United Nations, by the end of 2030, the number of people aged 60 and older will have increased by 34%, rising from 1 billion in 2019 to 1.4 billion globally. By 2050, this population will have more than doubled to 2.1 billion. Additionally, women generally have a longer lifespan than men. In 2017, women accounted for 54% of the global population aged 60 years or older and 61% of those aged 80 years or older[4].

South Australia

South Australia has the highest proportion of older people on mainland Australia with more than 700,000 people aged over 50 representing 37 per cent of the total population. The majority of over-65s (95%) live independently at home, with only one in four people aged 85 and over, living in aged care accommodation[5].

District Council of Loxton Waikerie

The 2021 Census reported that the DCLW had a population of 11.666 people with a median age of 48[6]. This is compared to a population of 11,487 and a median age of 46 according to the 2016 Census[7], and a population of 11,287 with a median age of 43 in the 2011 census[8]. Figure 6 illustrates the five-year age structure for DCLW.

[4]UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action 2021-2030

[5]South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025 - SA Health

[6]Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Loxton Waikerie (DC), https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA43790

[7]Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Loxton Waikerie (DC), https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2016/LGA43790

[8]Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Loxton Waikerie (DC), https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2011/LGA43790

Figure 3: Demographic Statistics for DCLW

Population
11,666

16%
Born overseas

35%
Lone households

45.7%
Aged 50+

24%
Volunteer

13%
Provide unpaid assistance to others

78%
Internet access

28%
At least one long-term health condition

Of residents aged 65 years and over

64%
Aged pension

17%
Profound or severe disability

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Who we heard from

Over 100 community members and stakeholders participated in ageing well engagement sessions. Please refer to the District Council of Loxton Waikerie Ageing Well Strategy 2025 – 2032 – Engagement Report for full details.

Community Survey

A survey was developed and launched online from Monday 10 February 2025 until Friday 28 February 2025 to gain an understanding of how the community utilises Council services, their experiences, their connection within community and any barriers they faced. 95 people answered the survey.

Community Workshops

Four community workshops were held in Waikerie and Loxton, with a total of 54 people attending a workshop.

Interviews

Eleven interviews were undertaken to gain insight into people's lived experiences and understand their perception of ageing well, including what they value in the DCLW and what can be improved.

Stakeholder Workshops

Three stakeholder workshops were undertaken, with 16 health sector professionals. These meetings enabled detailed conversations regarding current assets, strengths, gaps and opportunities relevant to ageing well in the district.

Open Feedback

The Healthy Environs team hosted open feedback sessions during their second visit in mid-March 2025. Approximately 22 people, including community members and stakeholders, participated in the open feedback sessions. At these sessions, the engagement findings were presented by the Healthy Environs team and confirmed by participants.

Image 1: Community consultation at Waikerie Bowling Club, February 2025

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

What we heard

> *People overwhelmingly expressed that the people in the community was what they valued the most. On the whole, the community cherish interpersonal connections, the variety of activities available, a deep appreciation for the natural environment, and a safe and peaceful lifestyle.*

The stakeholder and community meetings, along with the survey results, offered valuable perspectives into ageing in the DCLW. The feedback also provided useful insight into current strengths, gaps and opportunities against the State's strategic priorities. The Engagement Report details findings, with a snapshot provided below.

- 71% of the survey respondents specified that Council services and facilities are age friendly.
- Public toilets, car parks, walking trails and footpaths, community facilities, libraries, parks and reserves are the most utilised and highly valued facilities.
- Strong sense of community with many support groups providing opportunities for social connection and sense of purpose (e.g., Men's Shed, service clubs, Meals on Wheels, My Aged Care, in-home assistance).
- Volunteering is a major strength in the community, with many support services depending on volunteers to exist.

Some of the challenges raised by the community include:

- The lack of housing options and choice means people find it difficult to downsize, and others find it difficult to enter the housing market.
- The existing community groups and volunteers struggle to maintain their services as the community expands and would like support to continue delivering services to the community.
- Community members miss the newspaper as a source of local information. Many people indicated they struggled to find local information since the newspaper stopped.
- There are concerns in the community about Waikerie Main Street parking and road safety, particularly with the increased use of Gophers.
- The community raised issues regarding accessibility, quality and connectivity of footpath infrastructure.
- The Waikerie community expressed that the health and medical services are desperately inadequate. The current services could not meet current needs, and the needs are expanding as the Lifestyle Village attracts more people 50 years and above.
- Without public transport, a community bus, or affordable taxi service, many community members (particularly those without a car) are forced to rely on friends or family for transport.
- Many community members experience significant barriers accessing My Aged Care and other government benefits (technology, bureaucratic barriers).
- Accessing information and services is a challenge, particularly given the lower rates of digital literacy amongst the community.

AGEING WELL STRATEGY

OUR STRATEGY

Vision

Ageing well is a lifestyle that embraces independence and fosters deep community connections. It involves staying physically active, mentally engaged, and socially connected, while ensuring access to quality healthcare and support services. Our vision is to empower individuals to make their own choices, enjoy vibrant social ties, and live safely at home, all while continuing to contribute to the community and caring for their evolving needs.

Strategic Priority

DCLW Ageing Well Strategy is aligned with South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020 - 2025 strategic priorities:

- Home and Community
- Meaningful Connections
- Navigating Change

This alignment ensures that the Council's efforts are consistent with State Government investments.

Goals

- Increase housing diversity and accessibility
- Improve housing affordability
- Provide flexible and supportive home environments to enable people to age in place
- Promote strong neighbourhoods and community connections
- Opportunities for continual growth and meaningful contribution
- Improve transport options
- Improve access to supports that build resilience
- Provide support to cope with life's transitions

ACTION PLAN

Making the Vision Real

The Ageing Well Strategy includes a five-year action plan for implementation. The action plan is intended to be realistic, practical, and measurable, encouraging the community to stay active, engaged, and supported.

Actions under each strategic goal have been identified through community and stakeholder engagement and are informed by best practice.

This plan recognises the scope of local government's role in promoting and supporting community health and wellbeing. It is important to understand that a range of stakeholders play different roles in shaping the health and well-being of our older residents; therefore, many actions involve other stakeholders.

Council categorises their role into the following 10 descriptions:

Our Role	Our Promise
Advocate	Make representations on behalf of our community and engage in public policy development in the interests of our community.
Custodian	Manage community assets including buildings, facilities, public spaces, and roads on behalf of our community.
Facilitator	Bringing together stakeholders to collectively pursue a shared interest, desired direction, outcome, service or to resolve an issue.
Funding Applicant and Recipient	Apply for, receive, and expend funding and revenues as required by legislation or policy or via Federal, State and Grant Commission funding requirements.
Information Provider	Providing information to our community via reports, websites, social media, or other forums to inform our community.
Leader	Lead by example within, as well as on behalf, of our community.
Listener	Engaging with our community, seeking comments, opinions, and feedback in order to formulate future directions or improve services.
Partner	Working with others to achieve a common goal, deliver a project or provide a service.
Regulator	Exercising our responsibilities in response to legislative and compliance requirements.
Service Provider	Fully or partially fund or provide a service, project, or initiative on behalf of our community.

ACTION PLAN

Goal	Action	Time frame	Location	Role	Responsibility	Partners	Council Strategy
Home and Community							
Increase housing diversity and accessibility	Implement the Growth Strategy Five Residential Growth Area's identified for Loxton (Explore the rezoning of identified areas)	2025-2031	Loxton	Service Provider	Executive	Residential Developers State Government	Growth Strategy
	Implement the Growth Strategy Three residential growth areas identified for Waikerie	2025-2031	Waikerie	Service Provider	Executive	Residential Developers State Government	Growth Strategy
	Advocate that all future major developments to include: • Diverse and accessible homes	2025-2031	DCLW	Advocate	Executive	Residential Developers State Government	Growth Strategy
Improve housing affordability	Advocate that all future major developments to include: • Affordable homes • Affordable rental properties	2025-2031	DCLW	Advocate Leader Facilitator	Executive	Residential Developers State Government Rate Payers	Growth Strategy Cornerstone Housing Partnership
	Deliver "Active Ageing" information sessions to Council planning and development staff to raise awareness of ageing community needs regarding planning and development.	2025-2031	DCLW	Leader Information Provider	Officer	SA Planning and Design Code	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Increase renting options within retirement villages and provide more supported residential accommodation options.	2025-2031	DCLW	Leader Facilitator	Executive	Rate Payers State Government	Growth Strategy

ACTION PLAN

Goal	Action	Time frame	Location	Role	Responsibility	Partners	Council Strategy
Home and Community							
Provide flexible and supportive home environments to enable people to age in place	Attract more aged care training providers to increase local workforce.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator	Executive	TAFE SA Training Providers LGA	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Raise awareness amongst residents of the supports available via libraries, community notices, community celebrations, local radio, newspaper (e.g. My Aged Care, Meals on Wheels, Service Groups, etc.).	2025-2026	DCLW	Information Provider	Officer	Public and Private Health and Wellbeing Providers	Community Strategic Plan
	Increase availability of services and supports available (e.g., investigate hosting a variety of agencies on a rotating basis to enable residents to access services locally).	2025-2026	DCLW	Information Provider Partner	Officer	Public and Private Health and Wellbeing Providers	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Investigate options to improve access to community transport.	2025-2026	DCLW	Partner Service Provider	Executive	Neighbouring Councils RDA State Government	Community Strategic Plan

ACTION PLAN

Goal	Action	Time frame	Location	Role	Responsibility	Partners	Council Strategy
Meaningful Connections							
Promote strong neighbourhoods and community connections	Promote the value of social, service and volunteer groups.	2025-2031	DCLW	Information Provider	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers	Arts and Culture Strategic Plan
	Collaborate with the social, service and volunteer groups to further strengthen relationships and community wellbeing outcomes.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers Volunteer SA/NT	Community Strategic Plan
	Celebrate the strong community connections across the district via celebration events, expo, radio interviews, local markets etc.	2025 2031	DCLW	Facilitator	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers	Community Strategic Plan
	Improve communication, advertising and promotion of local information, events, support groups etc. via social media, radio, and printed formats.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator	Officer	Newspaper	Media Policy
	Deliver “Ageing Well” information sessions to economic development staff and Chambers of Commerce members prior to reviewing the economic development strategy. Include ageing well perspectives in the Economic Development Plan.	2026-2027	DCLW	Facilitator Leader	Officer	Chambers of Commerce RDA	Economic Development Plan

ACTION PLAN

Goal	Action	Time frame	Location	Role	Responsibility	Partners	Council Strategy
Meaningful Connections							
Provide opportunities for continual growth and meaningful contribution	Establish an Ageing Well calendar of events featuring guest speakers and topics of interest.	2025-2031	DCLW	Information Provider	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers	Arts and Culture Strategic Plan
	Organise community events (e.g., Community Christmas) and foster initiatives that bring services directly to residents.	2025-2031	DCLW	Information Provider Facilitator	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers	Arts and Culture Strategic Plan
	Actively support community and volunteer groups to cultivate the next generation of volunteers.	2025-2031	DCLW	Partner	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers Volunteer SA/NT	Arts and Culture Strategic Plan
Improve transport options	Conduct a series of prioritised accessibility audits to improve safety, mobility and connectivity. • Waikerie Main Street, Football Club and Lifestyle Retirement Village. • Loxton Main Street • All new developments within DCLW	2025-2031	DCLW	Custodian Listener	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers	Asset Management Plan
	Promote safe Gopher use guidelines.	2025-2026	DCLW	Information Provider	Officer	Service Groups and Volunteers	Community Strategic Plan
	Develop Community Transport Strategy (e.g. Investigate community transport network options in partnership with other Councils, courtesy DCLW bus, carpool groups, E-bike program).	2025-2026	DCLW	Facilitator Partner	Officer	Other Councils Social Enterprise Models	Community Strategic Plan

ACTION PLAN

Goal	Action	Time frame	Location	Role	Responsibility	Partners	Council Strategy
Navigating Change							
Improve access to supports that build resilience	Advocate, support, and promote physical and mental health and wellbeing programs for residents.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator	Officer	Health and Wellbeing Professionals	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Continue to consult with the community.	2025-2031	DCLW	Listener	All	Community	Community Engagement Policy
	Investigate partnership opportunities with Flinders Clinical School (e.g. place health professional graduates locally).	2025-2031	DCLW	Leader Partner	Executive	Flinders University	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Deliver digital literacy and safety training to increase confidence and skills of older residents in using digital platforms.	2025-2026	DCLW	Facilitator	Officer	Local IT specialists LGA	Community Strategic Plan
	Up-skill community services staff or create dedicated roles to assist residents in navigating technology, information and available services.	2025-2026	DCLW	Facilitator	Officer	Local IT specialists LGA	Community Strategic Plan
	Maintain and improve access to core community facilities, such as accessible public toilets, swimming pools, recreation centres, and extended gym hours.	2025-2031	DCLW	Custodian	Officer	N/A	Corporate Plan

ACTION PLAN

Goal	Action	Time frame	Location	Role	Responsibility	Partners	Council Strategy
Navigating Change							
Provide support with life's transitions	Advocate for increased medical services to be available for the increasing population.	2025-2031	DCLW	Advocate	Executive	SA Health	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Attract local My Aged Care agents to assist residents in accessing service.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator Partner	Officer	Public and Private Health and Wellbeing Providers	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Promote aged care training/apprenticeship opportunities in the area.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator Partner	Executive	TAFE Private Training Providers LGA	Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
	Advocate for increased investment in footpath connectivity, social and health infrastructure in all future major developments.	2025-2031	DCLW	Advocate	Executive	Residential Developers	Growth Strategy
	Enhance volunteer participation by reducing administrative and cost barriers.	2025-2031	DCLW	Facilitator Partner	Executive	LGA	Community Strategic Plan

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