



Ageing well in Victoria

An action plan for
strengthening wellbeing
for senior Victorians
2022–2026

To receive this document in another format email the **Office for Senior Victorians**, <seniorsprojects@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

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The cover image and page four shows models and an illustrative setting. The other images of senior Victorians are used with consent. Pages 13, 18, 22, 28, 33, 34, 40, 42 – University of the Third Age (U3A) Victoria Network. This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Minister's foreword



Our state is better off because of the significant contributions of senior Victorians. It's why we are ensuring they are appreciated, respected and enabled to live well later in life.

That means a high quality of living, the ability to spend time with loved ones, the opportunity to pursue hobbies and interests, and the financial stability and community support to achieve the things seniors want.

It's what every Victorian deserves as they reach this next stage of life.

That's why the Victorian Government has developed the Victorian Ageing Well Action Plan. It outlines the Victorian Government's vision to support Victorians to age well, so seniors can participate and contribute to their communities while staying close to family – whether this is in their own home, with a family member or in aged care.

The Action Plan supports Victorians from all backgrounds to connect socially and to live healthy, active, and purposeful lives. The plan's actions are based on the lived experience of older people and will be undertaken in partnership with community organisations, peak bodies, local government, and government services.

It will lead to better outcomes for older Victorians.

I thank the Commissioner for Senior Victorians and the members of the Senior Victorians Advisory Group for their contribution to the Action Plan and their passionate commitment to supporting older people in Victoria.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Brooks'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping 'C' at the beginning.

Hon Colin Brooks MP

Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victoria

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters on which we rely. We celebrate that Australia is rich in living Aboriginal culture, based on the values of reciprocity and respect for Elders and Country.

Treaty with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians

In Victoria, through treaty, there will be an important shift in the relationship between the State and Traditional Owners and First Peoples. This shift may enable greater Aboriginal control over decision making. The Victorian Government commits to working proactively to support this work in line with the aspirations of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

Ageing well in Victoria will involve regular reviews. This is so the plan may evolve or be updated to align with the Victorian treaty process, including actions, activities and supporting governance arrangements.

Victoria's seniors

Victoria's population is ageing.¹ In 2021 there were almost 1.5 million Victorians aged 60 years or older. This represents 22 per cent of the total population. By 2046 that number is expected to increase by around 60 per cent to more than 2.3 million people. By that point, about 25 per cent of the population will be 60 years of age or older.

The older population will increase more quickly than younger cohorts. Compared with the 60 per cent increase in the older population over the next 25 years, the population aged 20 to 59 years is expected to grow by 40 per cent. This younger cohort will remain at around 55 per cent of the total population throughout this period.

The older population is not a uniform group. Each sub-group of the population has different needs and is growing at a different rate. There are currently around 280,000 Victorians aged 80 or older, which is 4.3 per cent of the population. This age group is growing even faster than the older population as a whole. By 2046 it will have more than doubled in number and account for about 7 per cent of the total population. We can expect more frail and vulnerable older people living in their own homes for much longer. This includes increasing numbers of those living with dementia.

Among the older population there are more women than men, but the balance is changing. In 2021, 58 per cent of the 80+ population was female. As the gap between women's and men's life expectancy narrows, by 2046 the population aged 80 or older is expected to be about 56 per cent female and 44 per cent male.

¹ This section uses unpublished Victorian Government Projections (2021) unless otherwise stated. These figures are supplied by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). They are based on unpublished internal modelling. DELWP is the agency responsible for developing the official state government population projections. These include the latest population estimates, evidence from the latest Census plus assumptions about future births, deaths, migration and local development trends.

Victorians over the next 25 years

Age	Increase in population	2021	2046
20–59 years	40% ↑	This younger cohort will remain at around 55% of Victorians	This younger cohort will remain at around 55% of Victorians
60 years or older	60% ↑	22% of Victorians almost 1.5 million people	25% of Victorians more than 2.3 million people
80 years or older	100%+ ↑	4.3% of Victorians around 280,000 people	7% of Victorians more than 560,000 people

Victorians today

 <p>27% of Victorians aged 60 or older are from non-English speaking backgrounds</p> 	 <p>21% of Victorians under 60 years from non-English speaking backgrounds</p> 	 <p>Older people are living longer in their own homes</p> <p>about 50% of people who live alone are aged over 60</p> 	<p>almost 2/3 of people living alone are women over 60</p> 
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The 2016 Census² shows that 27 per cent of Victorians aged 60 or older are from non-English speaking backgrounds. This compares with 21 per cent for Victorians under 60 years of age. Greater Melbourne has the highest proportion of senior Victorians from non-English speaking backgrounds (35 per cent of people aged 60+). Geelong (14 per cent), Latrobe-Gippsland (10 per cent), Shepparton and Hume (8 per cent respectively) also have large rates of older people from non-English speaking backgrounds living locally.

The number of people aged 60 or older is higher in rural and regional Victoria (26 per cent in 2016) than in Greater Melbourne (18 per cent). This difference is expected to continue over the long term. Rapid and uneven growth for older people in regional areas has knock-on effects for services and communities. This is especially true for local government areas where a large share of the population is getting close to retirement age. In the Borough of Queenscliffe, for example, half of the population is older than 60 years and nine months (median age equal to 60.8). In the Shire of Loddon the median age is 54.

The number of older people in private homes is likely to grow as the population ages. More older people are living longer in their own homes. About half the people living alone are over the age of 60. This number will increase over time. As they tend to live longer than men, women represent almost two-thirds of the people over 60 who live alone.

The action plan recognises the influence of the social determinants on health and people's experience of ageing. Many senior Victorians identify with attributes and traits that can combine to create overlapping systems of disadvantage, discrimination and barriers to ageing well. This action plan adopts an intersectional approach, with particular regard for older Aboriginal Victorians.

We developed Victoria's *Closing the Gap* implementation plan in partnership with the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation sector, using shared governance structures. Under the plan the government is working to identify and embed initiatives that enable Aboriginal Elders to live longer, healthier and active lives. It highlights community engagement and connection in line with cultural protocols. This will be through embedding mandatory consideration of the needs and rights of Elders in all aspects of Victoria's implementation plan, including in each sector strengthening plan. We will also give early consideration to standalone policy for Aboriginal Elders.

² All 2016 data are from the ABS Census of Population and Housing (2016).

The action plan recognises that senior Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds can face extra challenges in keeping social connections and taking part in community life. This is often the case where there are language and communication barriers. The action plan recognises that LGBTIQ+ seniors may lack family connections and be at risk of isolation as a result of ageing.

As our population ages, we can expect more people to live to a very old age. More people will live longer in their own homes with support. *Ageing well in Victoria* sets out actions to address the needs of different groups of older people in Victoria in four priority areas.

Our vision

Senior Victorians enjoy the benefits of living longer, as respected members of our community.

The diversity of our population is valued and there are ongoing opportunities to contribute and take part in our communities as people age.

All Victorians can safely age in place at home, accessing services, maintaining purpose, independence and autonomy in life with family, community and social connections.

Ageing in place

Ageing in place is about staying independent in the familiar places where we live. It involves connections to local neighbourhoods and communities. Most people prefer to age in place. Ageing in place becomes possible through:

- age-friendly environments for mobility and safety
- local social activities
- opportunities for volunteering and exercise.

For some, ageing in place becomes possible through help with daily activities.

Older people living in aged care facilities also have the right to age well with:

- essential services
- community and family support
- opportunities for social participation and lifelong learning.

Ageing well in Victoria

Before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Commissioner for Senior Victorians surveyed approximately 5,000 older Victorians. The Commissioner asked what it means to age well, the barriers to ageing well and the opportunities to better support ageing well. The outcomes were released in the 2020 report, *Ageing well in a changing world*. The report details issues of concern to seniors and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

The action plan includes actions to support older Victorians to achieve and live with the **eight attributes of ageing well** the Commissioner identified:

1. A positive attitude

- to ageing, enjoying life and having fun
- able to deal with life changes such as loss and grief
- having realistic expectations about abilities and limitations
- accepting that help with daily life may be needed one day
- able to deal with a shrinking social circle as you age.

2. Life has purpose and meaning

- finding meaningful social roles and continue to contribute to society
- recognised and acknowledged as capable and able to contribute
- able to access employment, volunteering, lifelong learning and other opportunities
- having personal independence and autonomy in decision making
- key wishes and aspirations for living are understood and acknowledged.

3. Respected and respectful

- valued in society as a respected member of the community
- having a voice and the opportunity to be heard
- working together across generations and within community
- tolerant of others and receiving respect from others including government, younger people and businesses
- not subject to ageism, stigmatised, ignored or denied service because you are old
- respect for personal identity, culture, gender and diversity.

4. Connected to family, friends and society

- having and keeping fulfilling and sustaining social connections and personal relationships, including family relationships and friendships
- able to take part in meaningful activities related to interests
- having places to meet and connect with other people
- able to meet with people from the same cultural background as well as from diverse backgrounds
- able to get support for risks such as elder abuse.

5. In touch with a changing world

- not left behind in our changing world
- knowing what help is available as needs change and increase
- able to get information when needed
- having opportunities to develop technology skills and knowledge, and to access technology
- provided with alternatives to online platforms for information and services.

6. Safe and secure at home and financially

- having the right housing at the right time in the right place
- able to age in place with the right supports
- able to supplement income through work
- able to afford accommodation and utilities costs
- having access to a wide range of discounts for seniors
- feeling safe at home and in the community, particularly at night
- having the right support to manage family relationship stress and elder abuse
- able to access free and low-cost social activities
- able to undertake life planning and have decisions respected and supported.

7. Able to manage health issues including mental health

- able to access services and support when needed
- actively managing health conditions
- able to exercise and maintain good nutrition and a healthy diet
- having access to recreation and sporting facilities
- having the knowledge and information to access support and services, particularly mental health services
- having health needs, including mental health needs, recognised and responded to.

8. Able to get around

- having access to cost-effective local community transport services, particularly after giving up a driver's licence
- having access to parking and safe car parks, including select parking for seniors, carers and disability
- having an age-friendly built environment – for example, with pedestrian crossings and footpaths suitable for those using mobility aids.

Growing older is an achievement
and ageing is cause for celebration.



Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

In preparing this action plan, more than 5,000 older Victorians took part in a 2019 survey. One thousand older people got involved in in-person consultations with the Commissioner for Senior Victorians in 2021. This lived experience and these voices informed the action plan.

The latter research focused on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several positive outcomes were reported. These included that older people:

- became more visible
- were more motivated to get online to keep in touch with families
- found neighbours and strangers more friendly and supportive.

On the other hand, those who were already lonely and those in aged care had their loneliness magnified. Many older people reported declines in physical and mental health. Many spoke of uncertainty about the future and being unable to make plans.

Some viewed government messaging and media coverage on the pandemic as ageist and reinforcing ageist stereotypes. Ageist attitudes that cast older people as out of touch, forgetful or worthless worsened during the pandemic. Some media commentary framed the COVID-19 response as a 'health vs the economy' debate. This positioned the wellbeing of older people as secondary to the needs of the economy.

Even now, with a highly vaccinated population, many older people are wary of contracting COVID-19. Because they have a higher risk of serious illness and death, they are limiting activities such as exercise, social engagements and gatherings in groups. Some are delaying medical attention.





COVID-19 has heightened many issues that the Commissioner identified as barriers to ageing well, particularly:

- loneliness and isolation
- ageist attitudes
- difficulty accessing services, particularly online services.

What government will do – Ageing well in Victoria action plan

Action areas

To address the priority issues of older people, the government will deliver on this action plan in four priority areas.

Priority action area	Outcome
 Resilient, connected seniors	Older people have a sense of purpose through social, cultural and intergenerational connections.
 Tech-savvy seniors	Older Victorians can take part in the digital world. Those who can't do not experience discrimination, and can access services via other means.
 Valuing senior Victorians	Reduced ageism and increased visibility and appreciation of older people as valued and contributing Victorian citizens.
 Health self-care	Healthcare advances driven by the pandemic improve the health of older people and their ability to protect themselves.

An 'ageing well lens'

To strengthen the vision and actions of this action plan, the government will encourage an 'ageing well lens' in all government services and programs. This means factoring in the diverse needs of people of all ages and their different abilities into program and service design and delivery.

For example, Safer Care Victoria is undertaking work on age-friendly health services. A trial of improved responses for older cardiovascular patients is building in health self-care elements. During 2022, Safer Care Victoria will consult with the Senior Victorians Advisory Group on how to better include the consumer voice of older people in health service design. This will include more diverse older consumers' voices.

Senior Victorians without access to digital technology face challenges accessing online services. This heightened during the pandemic when many in-person services shut down. To help people without online access, government departments will be requested to develop alternatives to online access. This will target services for seniors and key social services that currently provide online access only.

For example, as part of its rollout of the March 2022 Victorian Travel Scheme, the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions designed a Seniors Travel Voucher Scheme. Under the scheme, a portion of the vouchers were set aside specifically for seniors. Seniors Card holders could apply online for five days. (This is instead of the first come, first served Statewide Travel Voucher Scheme where vouchers were exhausted in under an hour.) Seniors got support from a dedicated call centre to help with their applications.

Delivering in partnership and by listening

The Victorian Government supports diverse communities across all ages. We acknowledge the value of partnerships and co-design to plan and deliver services and to support culturally diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people and First Nations peoples. We will continue to consult with a diverse range of older people and with the members of the Senior Victorians Advisory Group about implementing activities in the four priority domains. We will continue to keep an eye on the ongoing issues that are important to our diverse senior population.

We will also ensure the needs of different age groups of older people are recognised and heard. The needs of people aged 60 to 70 years compared to those aged over 80, for example, can be as different as the needs of preschool children compared with those of young adults.

The government supports Metropolitan Partnerships and Regional Partnerships to advise on the important issues for community in their regions. Metropolitan Partnership Development Fund projects supporting older people include:

- Aboriginal Elders Cultural Wellbeing (metro-wide) – understanding issues and solutions for Elders related to social connection and mental wellbeing
- the Chatty Café Scheme (inner south-east) – local cafés supporting social connection
- digital inclusion (inner metro) – improving digital capability and improving digital literacy
- bilingual health workers (western) – supporting access to health services for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The government will continue to value feedback from Metropolitan Partnerships and Regional Partnership on the experience and needs of senior Victorians. We will prioritise their advice on designing and delivering policy and programs affecting senior Victorians.

The government recognises the important role and responsibilities of local government in providing support for people to age in place. Councils offer a range of programs and activities available in local communities. Councils also invest across a wide range of services and infrastructure to support older Victorians. The government will continue to consult with councils to better understand changes in local demographics and community need.

Our funded partnerships with peak bodies provide important policy advice on the diverse needs of our older population. They also provide information, advocacy and advice to older people. Funding arrangements with community-based organisations such as Universities of the Third Age, neighbourhood houses, men’s sheds and libraries provide local, community-driven activities.

We will work with local government, peak bodies and community-based organisations to deliver the actions in the action plan.

People who are socially engaged are happier and healthier than those who are not.





Resilient, connected seniors

Increasing opportunities for older people to retain a sense of purpose through social and intergenerational connections

The importance of social connections

Social connection to friends, family and community is vital to everyone's wellbeing. Many older people have fulfilling personal relationships through family contact, neighbourliness, volunteering or belonging to organisations and clubs. These can improve the experience of less social contact in later life due to:

- retirement
- loss of family connections
- death of a partner
- onset of illness
- entry to residential aged care
- loss of mobility.

Loneliness and social isolation can severely affect physical health and mental wellbeing. Loneliness in older people can lead to depression, mental impairment, heart disease and high blood pressure. These conditions can mean admitting a person to acute health services or aged care too early. Health concerns can also mean more visits to emergency departments. Loneliness can also lead to risk-taking behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse and further isolation.

People who are socially engaged are happier and healthier than those who are not. They have better levels of health and wellbeing that, in turn, allow ongoing social activity and wellbeing.

Older people told the Commissioner for Senior Victorians that volunteering and belonging to clubs or community groups is vital for having meaning and purpose in life. It also leads to social connections that they can sustain. During our extended lockdown periods, many community-based organisations stopped operating. This meant they lost volunteers and members, and stopped running activities. Helping older people and community organisations get back to offering social activities will help the wellbeing of all Victorians.

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
<p>More volunteering opportunities for seniors. We will work with the volunteer sector to deliver meaningful and flexible volunteering roles in safe, age-friendly and inclusive spaces.</p>	From 2022	More people volunteer
<p>Consideration of the needs of older migrants and refugees. This follows the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into support for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds.</p>	2022–23	The needs of older migrants and refugees are identified and explored
<p>Under the Victorian Government’s LGBTIQ+ and youth strategies, support opportunities for young and older LGBTIQ+ people to foster connections with peers and LGBTIQ+ communities.</p>	2022–25	More social connection across the LGBTIQ+ community and better health outcomes

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
<p>Continue to expand and reimagine the Victorian Seniors Festival. This includes online performances and the Recognising Senior Victorians Living in Aged Care program. The program reaches out to aged care residents to record and post their life stories on Seniors Online.</p>	2022–24	Greater recognition and entertainment for aged care residents
<p>An education campaign across the Victorian public service for the recently launched Public Engagement Framework (PEF). The PEF has two domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build stronger relationships and engaged communities • A public sector that engages effectively with Victorians. 	2022–23	Increased capability within the VPS in running public consultations

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
<p>Support for multicultural seniors' groups through the Multicultural Seniors Support program. This will be for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excursions • cultural activities • regular gatherings • running costs • purchasing resources or equipment (sewing machines, laptops, printers) for the benefit of groups and members • delivering practical supports (such as home deliveries of essential items) • advancing multicultural seniors' internet accessibility, digital literacy and access to computers. 	2022–25	Reduced social isolation and better social connections among multicultural seniors

The pandemic has exposed the extent and impact of the 'digital divide'.





Tech-savvy seniors

Older Victorians can take part in the digital world. Those who can't are not discriminated against and can access services via alternative means

The digital divide

There are many social benefits to being online and connecting with family, friends and communities of interest across the globe. There are economic benefits in being able to take advantage of online goods and service offers. These parts of the 'new normal' of the pandemic include:

- shopping online
- completing forms or applications on websites
- using telehealth for medical appointments
- accessing digital vaccination certificates
- getting information for help and support online.

Many people previously not online adapted to digital devices for family connection and essential services during lockdowns. At the same time, the pandemic has exposed the extent and impact of the 'digital divide'. While the COVID-19 pandemic showed the ability of some older people to engage with digital technology including attending online meetings, many have been left behind.

Given the rapid growth in use of digital platforms by banks, governments and essential services, many people need extra support to use online services and resources. The online world is getting more complex. There are many older people who need extra training, guidance and practical help to navigate it safely and securely. In every one of the Commissioner's consultations held in 2019, people talked about:

- the lack of ability to use and keep up with technology
- the cost of maintaining and updating systems
- the difficulty of finding someone to help them improve their technology skills.

The government will encourage an 'ageing well lens' view in all government services and programs.

Many older people have safety concerns with using digital technology. This leaves them open to online exploitation and the targets of scammers. Targets often include:

- older women who live alone
- lonely people
- those with little experience of managing household finances.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission reports that between January and September 2021 people aged 65 years or older lost the most money of any age group to scammers: in total, \$49.1 million or 23 per cent of total losses occurred in that period. Helping older people to use digital technology and be in the online world includes training and information on cyber safety and how to detect and avoid scammers. The Victorian Government will continue to work with industry and Victoria Police to improve online safety for older people.

The Senior Victorians Advisory Group noted the digital divide as a key priority for government action. The Victorian Government has asked the Commissioner for Senior Victorians to review and provide further advice about how to improve the levels of digital connectedness for senior Victorians. This will include priority issues of:

- improving digital ability and building confidence
- affordability concerns
- addressing privacy and scamming protections.

Some people may never make the leap across the digital divide. We will ask government departments to develop options for alternatives to online access for services targeted to seniors. This will include key social services that currently only offer online access.

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
<p>Improved digital access through the Connecting Victoria program. This will invest in better mobile coverage and broadband across the state. Locations will be based on economic uplift, digital inclusion and community input. This will help identify where services are not meeting user needs.</p>	From 2022	More people with better access to the internet across Victoria
<p>Government departments will be requested to develop alternatives to online access. This will be for services targeted to seniors and for key social services that currently only offer online access.</p>	2022–23	Services easier to access for those not online
<p>Resources for the Commissioner for Senior Victorians to review digital connectedness and provide advice to government.</p>	2022–23	Clearer understanding of strategies to strengthen and build digital connectedness among Victorian seniors
<p>Older people are more vulnerable to injury and death in road crashes. Explore ways to encourage older people to use vehicles fitted with five-star safety technologies. Diversify travel modes to promote the health benefits of active transport.</p>	From July 2022	Older drivers and passengers are more aware of the safety benefits of newer vehicles and options for alternative mobility modes

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
The Learn Local network is supporting pre-accredited training in local communities . This includes core skills training such as digital skills for contemporary workplaces, further study and life.	Current and ongoing	People have stepping stones to formal training options and jobs
The Social Seniors program in partnership with Telstra and public libraries. Social Seniors offers older people low-cost or free training in libraries in how to use social media .	2022–23	Increased safe use of social media among older Victorians
Improved cyber safety drawing on existing scams awareness resources and campaigns , including from the national Scamwatch network and Consumer Affairs Victoria.	Current and ongoing	More people will be able to connect with online information, communication, and resources with confidence to recognise and avoid scams

To age well requires our community to have a positive view of older people.



Valuing senior Victorians

Increasing the visibility of older people as valued and contributing Victorian citizens

Tackling ageism and discrimination

No matter their age, background or gender, most people want to be part of our whole community. They want to be valued for their contribution and treated with respect. **To age well requires our community to have a positive view of older people.** It means recognising their ability to contribute to society and the economy. But many older people talk about their experience of 'becoming invisible' as they age. They are concerned their needs are often not acknowledged within the wider community.

Being treated differently because of your age can lead to feeling vulnerable and can erode self-esteem. While ageism is a driver of elder abuse, women are more likely than men to be victims through lifelong patterns of family violence. Women's longer life expectancy means many more women live alone in later life. The number of homeless older women is increasing due to:

- family violence
- insecure housing and income
- lack of superannuation.

In 2020, Age Discrimination Commissioner Dr Kaye Paterson AO reported ageism across all ages as the most accepted form of prejudice in Australia. The average duration of mature age unemployment is 75 weeks. This compares with 48 weeks across all age groups. Older age is the main reason why employers reject job applications. A study by the University of New South Wales found increases in older-age participation in work are slowing. This is despite older Australians being healthier, more educated and more employable.



Those who were already lonely and those in aged care had their loneliness magnified.

Older LGBTIQ+ people are likely to have experienced a history of stigma, isolation and criminalisation during most of their lifetime. This can have consequences for how private and discreet some are about their sexuality. For example, there is a trend of returning to live in 'the closet' once entering aged care due to a fear of discrimination and misunderstanding.

Intergenerational programs have the potential to reduce stigma associated with ageing. They can reduce discrimination and build social capital by strengthening intergenerational ties and promoting mutual support and understanding. Intergenerational programs can reduce or prevent social isolation. They can nurture a sense of taking part and of meaningful engagement. Also, by enabling older adults to mentor or tutor children and youth, intergenerational programs have the potential to improve life outcomes for younger people.

Providing support to employers to recruit and keep on older workers can address age discrimination in the workplace.

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
Extending the Seniors Card to Aboriginal people from age 50 years.	From 2022	More Aboriginal older people will have access to Seniors Card benefits
The <i>State disability plan 2022–26</i> . The plan aims to embed universal design principles in all elements of the design and delivery of infrastructure projects. It seeks to identify opportunities to strengthen safeguards to better protect people with disability who are at risk of abuse or neglect. This includes older Victorians.	From July 2022	Improved design and delivery of infrastructure projects for older Victorians and strengthened inclusive practices and better outcomes for people with disability
Alliances and collaborations on activities to improve awareness of ageism (Commissioner for Senior Victorians). This includes working with the Every Age Counts campaign. Every Age Counts is a long-term national campaign tackling ageism. It aims to improve the value and respect afforded to older people and the experience of growing older.	From 2022	Increased awareness of the negative impacts of ageism and respect for older Victorians
Action to address the barriers faced by women that contribute to disadvantage in later life through the renewed <i>Gender equality strategy</i> .	Current and ongoing	Increased outcomes for women of all ages across four key focus areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety • health and wellbeing • leadership and representation • economic equity

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
<p>Refreshed business discount offerings to older people through the Seniors Card and Senior Business Discount Card. We will review and update the Seniors Card digital channels. These include Seniors Online, the Seniors Card Facebook page and a digital Seniors Card.</p>	2022–23	<p>More and easier-to-reach Seniors Card offers will help reduce the cost of living for older people</p>
<p>Pathways for older people into the post-compulsory education and training system. We will work with the Victorian Skills Authority and the Department of Education and Training to deliver this. It will involve exploring the barriers that prevent older people from accessing courses for reskilling and retraining. It will also cover the associated transition into meaningful employment.</p>	2022–23	<p>Older long-term unemployed people have more opportunity to gain employment</p>
<p>Improved housing options for older people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. This is based on the principle of ageing in place. It includes options to age in place in locations that maintain social networks. This includes action to prevent and respond to homelessness among older people as a priority cohort.</p>	From July 2022	<p>More stable housing options for vulnerable older people to age at home with support and social connections</p>
<p>The continued trial of an integrated model of care for responding to suspected elder abuse in five public health services.</p>	2022–23	<p>Strengthened elder abuse identification, responses and support across five health services</p>

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
Eight Elder Abuse Prevention Networks for a further year. This will ensure service responses and primary prevention efforts continue to support and protect older Victorians from elder abuse.	2022–23	Elder abuse prevention through targeted local community action that raises awareness of and addresses the drivers of elder abuse
The continuation of the Preventing Elder Abuse Through Financial Counselling project in bushfire-affected communities of East Gippsland, Alpine and Towong. This will ensure targeted support for older people. It will help the finance and related workforces to identify, prevent and respond to elder abuse alongside recovery efforts.	2022–23	Targeted and timely support to older people in bushfire-affected communities, helping to prevent or reduce elder abuse

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
Continued encouragement to councils to plan for people to age well in place through age-friendly communities. Improving the health and wellbeing of older people through municipal public health and wellbeing plans .	Current and ongoing	The needs of an ageing population are included in municipal public health and wellbeing plans and services

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
<p>The Jobs Victoria Fund provides wage subsidies of up to \$20,000 to help businesses employ new staff, with a focus on groups of jobseekers most affected by the economic impacts of the pandemic. The Fund has specifically set aside \$50m for women over the age of 45.</p> <p>The Fund also supports targeted, large-scale projects that provide people with training and jobs in sectors with workforce shortages, with a focus on older workers – particularly increasing women’s participation in majority-men industries, such as transport and logistics.</p>	Current	Increased support for older long-term job seekers and businesses to employ older workers
<p>Local Jobs Victoria Advocates support Victorians looking for work and help people navigate employment and training services through proactive outreach in local communities – in libraries, community centres, sports clubs, public housing foyers and shopping centres – to connect people with the information, support and training that is right for them.</p> <p>Jobs Victoria Advocates focus on communities where rates of unemployment are high to help increase social and economic participation and engage with community members to understand their needs and connect them to relevant services.</p>	Current	Increased support for older long-term job seekers

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
<p>Jobs Victoria Mentors work with job seekers of all ages to help them become work-ready, find a job that suits them, and to support them in their role for the first six months. Mentors offer personalised support by connecting job seekers to services such as re-training, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy courses and referrals to Skills & Job Centres that can help with resumes.</p>	Current	Increased confidence for older job seekers and workers to explore career options
<p>A Jobs Victoria Careers Counsellor to provide assistance to plan work goals, such as a job search, or to identify skills and strengths, or to explore a career change.</p>	Current	Increased confidence for older job seekers and workers to explore career options

The older population is not a uniform group.



Positive mental health
and wellbeing links with
physical health and
ageing well.





Health self-care

Leveraging healthcare advances driven by the pandemic to improve the health of older people and their ability to protect themselves

Increased control over health and health limitations

A strong factor in quality of life as we get older is understanding how to manage the onset of health conditions. This helps in maintaining independence. More broadly, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of self-management in health care. People have tackled the virus through individual actions such as:

- physical distancing
- hand sanitising and washing
- wearing face masks
- getting vaccinated.

One clear lesson from the pandemic has been the importance of actions by individuals, governments and health services to manage health risks. Good health literacy can prevent hospital and emergency admissions. It also keeps healthcare costs down.

Positive mental health and wellbeing links with physical health and ageing well. Through Victoria's reform of the mental health system, the government commits to ensuring senior Victorians have the same access to mental health treatment, care and support as the wider adult population.

Ageing in place is about staying independent in the familiar places where we live.

In recent years people aged 50 years or older have been more likely to drink alcohol. They are doing so at riskier levels than in previous generations. People in this age group more often use illicit and non-prescribed pharmaceutical drugs. The specific risks linked with drinking include cardiovascular disease, dementia and various cancers. For drug use, the risks include overdose and chronic health conditions.

We recognise that complex interactions of various political, social, economic and environmental conditions determine a person's health, experience of disease and mortality. But the pandemic has shown us the importance and benefits of supporting healthy behaviours. Despite this, many older people have postponed treatments or medical care for ongoing conditions because of fear of catching the virus on public transport or in a hospital. Even with our high vaccination rate, older people are wary of contracting COVID-19. This makes sense given the higher risk of serious illness and death. Older people have continued to avoid activities such as exercise, medical visits and social engagements.

What the government will deliver	When	Impact
<p>Innovative models to improve the health of older people. VicHealth will explore this through intergenerational methodologies within its existing strategic agenda.</p>	From 2022	Improved health and wellbeing of older Victorians
<p>Incorporation of the evidence-based elements of ageing well in guidance to councils for their municipal health and wellbeing plans (Department of Health).</p>	From 2024	More local ageing well strategies to benefit older people
<p>Victoria’s end-of-life and palliative care framework. This will ensure all Victorians and their families receive the best possible end-of-life care. This care will place them at the centre where preferences, values, dignity and comfort are respected, and quality of life matters most.</p>	Current and ongoing	Improved end-of-life and palliative care
<p>Service delivery across Victoria at local, area-based and statewide levels, including 22 Adult and Older Adult Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services. We will deliver these partnerships between public health services and hospitals and non-government organisations that provide wellbeing supports.</p>	2022–23	Improved mental health and wellbeing of adults and older adults with higher levels of need
<p>A responsive integrated mental health and wellbeing service stream for older Victorians. The stream will ensure improved access to the same mental health treatment, care and support as the rest of the adult population.</p>	2022–23	Improved care and mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older adults

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
<p>The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum strategic priorities. These are in line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap priority reforms and Korin Korin Balit-Djak system transformation priorities.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Aboriginal community-controlled organisations enabled to support Elders to determine their health priorities and plans</p>
<p>Cancer screening and health promotion programs on type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke prevention.</p>	Ongoing	<p>More people engaging in healthy activities to prevent and address chronic conditions</p>
<p>Social prescribing trials in the first six Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services. The trials will prioritise isolated senior Victorians, supporting health professionals to refer people with psychological distress or mental illness into community initiatives.</p>	From 2022 (three-year trial)	<p>Improved community participation, inclusion and connection for senior Victorians</p>
<p>The largest public sector residential aged care services (PSRACS) sector in Australia. The sector will provide 5,620 operational PSRACS places across Victoria (at 31 March 2021). PSRACS also include specialist aged persons' mental health facilities. These facilities address the needs of vulnerable older people with complex physical and/or mental health needs.</p>	Current and ongoing	<p>Maintaining access to appropriate care and support for senior Victorians with socioeconomic disadvantage, or who have complex care needs</p>

What the government is delivering	When	Impact
Aged persons mental health inpatient units. These units provide assessment and treatment for older adults with acute symptoms of mental illness through recovery-oriented care.	Current and ongoing	Improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older people during an acute phase of mental illness
60 Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services. These services offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health treatment, care and support for people with mental health needs related to ageing • consultative help to primary and secondary care services that support older people, including of aged care. 	From 2022–23	Improved mental health care access and wellbeing outcomes for older people

We will continue to consult with older people and listen to their lived experience.



Next steps

We will continue to consult with older people and listen to their lived experience through the Commissioner for Senior Victorians and the Senior Victorians Advisory Group (SVAG). The Commissioner for Senior Victorians chairs the SVAG. Its membership includes peak bodies and organisations representing a wide range of interests affecting senior Victorians. Members of the SVAG have provided advice throughout the pandemic on the status of older people.

The SVAG will continue to track and advise on the needs of older Victorians. The Commissioner, with the help of the SVAG will undertake another survey of older Victorians on 'ageing well' in 2022. This survey will identify more opportunities to improve and support ageing well for all Victorians. The Commissioner will report on how we are travelling.



