

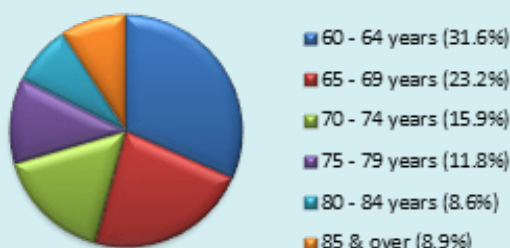


Ageing

DID YOU KNOW?

19% of the Blue Mountains population is over 60; this equates to 13,673 residents; with 9.4% of our population over 70 years of age:

Ageing population in the Blue Mountains (2011 ABS Census)



Between 2011-2036, the increase in the local population **over 70+ will be 30% greater than the NSW State average.**

Sustainable Blue Mountains: Progress & Issues Background Paper found that:

- the ageing of the population continues to place increased pressure on health, housing (nursing homes, retirement villages etc.) and community services and facilities. In 2011, 29,421 people (39% of the population) were aged 50 years+, compared to 25,328 people (34%) in 2006.

- ensuring the Blue Mountains have a balance of people of different age groups is important in terms of retaining age-based facilities (e.g. pre-schools,) and having a healthy diverse community where different age groups can enrich and support each other.

Currently 2,360 people (or **3.2% of the BM population**) are **institutionalised locally** (0.5% higher than Sydney figures; nationally, only 12% of the population 80+ are institutionalised).

In general terms, people age and live until they die in their communities, in their homes. This means that **infrastructure, services and planning need to be adjusted to reflect and support**

the local demographic of older residents to support them to age with resilience, remain connected within their community and maintain an acceptable quality of life.

There is a **significant volunteer workforce supporting service delivery** to those in need e.g. BMFS's Meals on Wheels. This volunteer workforce itself is ageing, & many volunteers are likely to move from being service providers to service recipients in 10-15 years.

The potential for increased social isolation for our older population is real, as they age across our ribbon geography; we need to review how we live in communities, & how housing options are developed into the future to accommodate our ageing populations, living longer & living locally.

The ageing demographic locally is further compounded by 15.2% of our population falling in the 50-59 year age group (with this group growing at a rate 3% faster than Sydney); and falling rates of the local population in the 18-34 year age bands.

This means the Blue Mountains population will age, and not grow (by natural means). The number of working aged adults will decrease, the number of children and young people will decrease, and the aged population will steadily increase. **By 2020, 1 in every 5 residents of the Blue Mountains will be over 65.**

Research has shown in Australia, USA & UK that **many gay elders are afraid to be open about their sexual orientation, and often delay using community help services.** Many have gone back to the closet (pretending to be straight) out of fear that they may be abused or discriminated against or judged in some way:

- many gay elders delay asking for help or make arrangements for a nursing home or other facility until it is too late. They may have accidents at home, have unnecessary operations or have permanent physical problems when they could have been getting some home help to reduce risks, or just for some contact with other people.

Our Goals

- Engage in strategic community conversation around the possibilities for a vibrant older Blue Mountains.
- Develop a resilient and inclusive community environment for the older residents of the Blue Mountains, now and into the future.
- Advocate for the health and safety requirements of the Blue Mountains older population.
- Accommodate the needs of this growing population & open up opportunities for service growth.
- Target priority areas for planning & development, ensuring that they are in step with the emerging older demographic for this region e.g.

local access to services, improved and sensitive transport options.

- Ensure input from the BM Community Sector regarding planning & development; and identify innovative options for service delivery across and within services and the service sector.
- Work with key stakeholders across all levels of Government to ensure that the needs of this vulnerable population are accounted for when services are planned, implemented, or restructured; and that local funding priorities are adjusted to reflect the growing need.
- Build capacity within the broader Blue Mountains Community, by engaging key stakeholders to assist in reorientating services and funding distribution.
- Consult widely with the target group around their specific and perceived needs and issues.

What We're Doing to Achieve Our Goals

The highly successful **Blue Mountains Seniors Expo 2014** was held in November 2014 at the Springwood Sports Club. Community interest was overwhelming, with well over 300 visitors attending the Expo. Visitors were able to spend time gathering information from the 42 services who participated in the Expo and feedback from the seniors community and stall holders was overwhelmingly positive - with many visitors appreciating that they could come to a single location and event to have all their questions answered.

Advocating and lobbying for improved services & infrastructure with this population group in focus e.g. transport.

Advocating for, and assisting individuals to, maximise their health, safety, security and well-being (e.g. safe & affordable housing, proactive support services to meet the individual's needs and maintain them within their community).

Improved and inclusive building codes to enable innovative use of land and space.

Developing partnerships with service providers and various levels of government; eg:

- BLINN (the consortium of Blue Mountains & Lithgow Neighbourhood Centres) was recently successful in a Home & Community Care (HACC) tender to deliver a range of services to support people to remain in their homes (such as social support, domestic assistance & social transport);

- Springwood and Katoomba Neighbourhood Centres also offer related services (social support to socially isolated people in aged care facilities and those living in their own homes who receive a Home Care package) via the Community Visitor Scheme, which pairs volunteers with residents of aged care facilities;

- the Volunteer Home Visitors program is operated through four Neighbourhood Centres – Lower Mountains, Springwood, Mid-Mountains and Katoomba, pairing volunteers with residents living in their own homes; and

- Blue Mountains Home Modification & Maintenance Services is offered Mountains-wide through Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre;

Delivering innovative services targeting seniors across the Blue Mountains, to optimise their well-being and community connectedness include, but are not limited to:

Health & Fitness	Social inclusion	Targeted Support Groups/Services	Education
Strengthening for over 60's (exercise training for older people)	Community Volunteer Home Visitor Programs	Men's Carers Group	TAFE Computer Courses for Seniors
Functional Fitness	Community Visitor Schemes	Dementia Carers Support Group	Safe & Sustainable Gardening Resources for Seniors
Yoga for Seniors	'Vocal Locals' Seniors Choir	Carers Support Group	U3A courses
Thai Chi	Seniors Book or Classic Film Club	Palliative Support Service	
	The Third Thursday Afternoon Tea for Older People	Blue Mountains Home Modification & Maintenance Services	

How is State Government Contributing to These Achievements?

✓ **The NSW Ageing Strategy** is a whole of government and whole of community strategy which supports individuals to take responsibility for their futures and commits government to recognise and remove barriers to continued participation. The Government's vision for ageing is that people in NSW experience the benefits of living longer:

✓ seniors lead active and rewarding lives and are valued members of the community

✓ adults make decisions that support their independence and wellbeing later in life

✓ NSW responds effectively to the challenges and opportunities of population ageing.

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The strategy contains specific actions that the NSW Government is committing to implement (generally to be implemented in the next 3 years). Ageing issues will be addressed through other major government reforms in areas such as planning, transport, community participation and health, disability and community services:

- tackling abuse (by establishing a helpline & resource centre);
- *Tech savvy seniors* (low cost training will be provided for older people to use smart phones, tablets and computers);
- linking seniors to information (expanding the Seniors Card program to include information on government & local community activities);

- living active lives (the existing grants program through the Department of Sport & Recreation);

- travelling safely (promoting the independence & safety of older people as they move from driving to other forms of transport);

- work skills, workplace value (people in their 40s & 50s will be a priority for training programs; the initiative will also seek to reduce barriers to older people staying in work);

- *My life, my decisions* (community education initiative to encourage people to complete wills, powers of attorney, enduring guardianships & advanced care directives);

- *Securing your future* (a community education strategy targeted at people in middle years regarding the critical decisions they make that will affect their wellbeing later in life);

- Public-private partnerships (to maximise commercial opportunities as a result of the population ageing);

- age-friendly local communities (grant programs to help Councils meet the needs of an ageing population including the accessibility of the built environment and community activities to build social connection);

- housing choices (supporting greater housing choices by improving information sharing on future housing needs and monitoring the impact of existing planning schemes);

- incorporate into Cabinet processes consideration of the impact of population ageing & new policy decisions on the long-term fiscal position of NSW.

Produced in collaboration with the Blue Mountains Community Interagency ©  mcrn 2015



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Mountains Community Resource Network is the peak body for the Blue Mountains Community Sector.