

AGEING WELL IN BALLARAT STRATEGY 2027–2030

Engagement Summary

Proudly working
with and for
our community



Executive Summary

The City of Ballarat undertook community engagement to inform the development of its next Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy between 26 March and 23 June 2026.

The aim of this engagement was to hear directly from the Ballarat community, particularly people aged 50 years and over, carers for older people, and local organisations, about their experiences, preferences and priorities for an age-friendly Ballarat over the next four years.

Using a range of engagement methods including printed and online surveys, in person opportunities, small group discussions with Age-friendly Ambassadors and via community workshops, and other feedback opportunities, the broader community could share their feedback in meaningful and accessible ways.

The findings provide valuable insight into the experiences, needs and aspirations of older people in Ballarat. They highlight areas of community strength, identify priorities for improvement, and reinforce the need to address barriers such as transport, social isolation, and access to health and support services. The findings also reflect the diversity of experiences across the community and highlight opportunities to better recognise, support and build on the strengths, capacities and contributions of older people as active and valued members of the community.

The findings will guide a targeted and evidence-based approach to inform the Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy 2027–2030.

Consultation findings were considered through the lens of the World Health Organization's Age-friendly Cities Framework, which is structured around 8 interconnected domains:



**Places, Spaces
and Buildings**



Transport



Housing



**Social
Participation**



**Respect and
Social Inclusion**



**Civic Participation
and Employment**



**Communication
and Information**



**Community Support
and Health Services**

The Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy and Action Plan uses this framework to align our engagement, planning and measurement of progress alongside local, national, and international communities around the world who share a common goal of being an age-friendly city.

Building on the Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy 2022–2026, the next Strategy will guide the City of Ballarat's work over the next four years to support Ballarat to become an increasingly age-friendly city, aligning with our commitment as a member of the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, and with community expectations.

Engagement Summary



Over 650

people contributed
across all
engagement activities



19 events

or activities utilised
the single question
feedback board



Almost 30%

of the survey respondents
completed a printed survey



Over 25%

of survey respondents
identified as living with disability
or chronic health condition



32%

of survey respondents
identified as employed
– full time, part time or casual



23%

of survey respondents
were 76 years or over

Introduction

The current City of Ballarat Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy 2022 - 2026 concludes at the end of December 2026. A new strategy is therefore needed to guide how the City of Ballarat will support people aged 55 years and over to thrive over the next four years.

The Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy 2027 - 2030 is informed by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Age-friendly Cities Framework.

Overview of the WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework

Developed in 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly Cities Framework is an internationally recognised approach that helps plan for an ageing population in a practical and evidence informed way.

The framework includes eight age-friendly and interconnected domains that help communities adapt to the needs of older residents to promote health, inclusion, and independence:

- Places, Spaces and Buildings
- Transport
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Respect and Social inclusion
- Civic Participation and Employment
- Communication and Information
- Community Support and Health Services

Communities worldwide use this framework because it is flexible, evidence based and grounded in the lived experience of older people.

Explore more information about the WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework:
<https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework/>

The 8 WHO Age-Friendly Domains





Engagement methods

This engagement contributes to a wider body of community feedback gathered between November 2024 and June 2026. Combined with insights from other engagement activities, the findings help inform the development of the Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy 2027-2030, including its strategic direction, priorities and actions.

The engagement methods outlined below were used to gather community feedback during the most recent engagement period, conducted between March and June 2026.

Community members could provide feedback online, in person, by phone or through hard-copy responses. Multiple participation options were offered to accommodate different needs, interests and availability.

The engagement findings provide a strong evidence base to inform future planning, decision-making and strategic priorities. They highlight the needs, experiences and aspirations of older people in Ballarat, and support the development of actions that respond to what community members, stakeholders and staff identified as important for ageing well.

A range of engagement methods were used to gather feedback from older residents, community members, stakeholders and City of Ballarat staff. These methods are outlined below.



Community Survey

- The community survey was open from 26 March to 31 May 2026 and was available online and in hard copy. Printed surveys were available at selected locations and events such as the Phoenix Building, Ballarat Libraries, Community Hubs, the Let's Chat Ballarat Expo, the Ballarat Ageing Well Expo, and other events and activities during the engagement period. Printed surveys could also be posted to community members on request.
- The survey received 208 responses, including 146 online responses and 62 hard copy responses. Feedback captured older people's perspectives, interests, barriers and priorities for ageing well in Ballarat.



Single question feedback

- To encourage participation and make it easy for the community to provide their views, the community engagement process also included asking the community to respond to one question - ***Over the next four years, what is one thing you think Council should prioritise for people aged 55 and over?***
- This question was asked throughout the engagement period in a variety of ways and across a range of settings including online, in person and through hard copy written feedback.
- People provided their feedback via:
 - MySay Ballarat Visioner and voting (online). **(35 responses and 24 votes)**
 - In person on an A1 feedback board across 19 events, activities or engagement opportunities. **(245 responses)**
 - Ageing Well Activity feedback printed forms. **(64 responses across eight activities)**



Single question feedback

- A stakeholder survey was shared with aged care sector and community support group stallholders at the Ballarat Ageing Well Expo in May 2026.
- The survey was completed by 11 stakeholders and provided insights into sector issues and priorities, barriers to access, and groups at greater risk of exclusion.



Age-friendly Ambassador meetings

- Age-friendly Ambassador meetings were held in March and May 2026.
- Age-friendly Ambassadors reviewed the current Strategy outcomes and Action Plan, identified potential gaps and opportunities, and reflected on the Strategy vision and focus area goals.
- In total, eight Age-friendly Ambassadors contributed during one or both meetings.



Community Workshops

- Two dedicated community workshops were held in June with a total of 19 community members attending.
- These workshops provided an opportunity to further examine themes emerging from the engagement process. Participants shared their insights and experiences relating to communication methods and preferences, confidence in using digital technology and accessing support, and their experiences of providing feedback to Council, including participating in community engagement activities.



Ageing Well Services Staff Survey

- The Ageing Well Services Staff Survey was completed in February 2026.
- The survey explored what was working well, areas for improvement, service gaps, emerging needs and opportunities.



City of Ballarat Staff Workshop

- A facilitated workshop was held with 36 staff members representing a range of teams across the City of Ballarat.
- The workshop focused on identifying the elements of an age-friendly workplace, current and future opportunities to contribute to Council's commitment to being an age-friendly community, and priorities for future action.

Together, these engagement methods provided a broad and balanced understanding of what people value as they grow older, the issues that matter most to them, the supports they need, and the factors that influence their connection to community. The engagement also highlighted people's interests and preferences, as well as barriers and opportunities to making Ballarat more age-friendly.

Community engagement opportunities were promoted using broad methods including:

- The Ageing Well email and printed newsletter
- Other City of Ballarat newsletters
- MySay Ballarat
- Promotion on several social media pages
- Media release on the City of Ballarat website
- In-person promotion at Ageing Well social activities, expos and other events
- In-person promotion at 'Let's Chat Ballarat Expo'
- Through existing networks, including Senior Citizen Clubs, libraries and community hubs
- Local media including radio
- The City of Ballarat staff newsletter

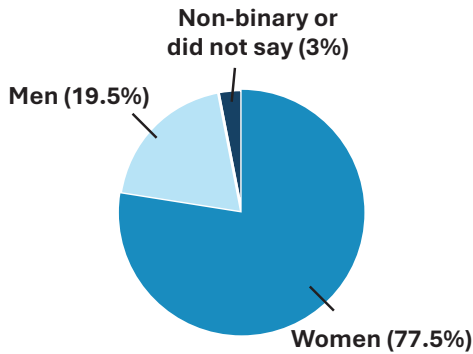
Participation



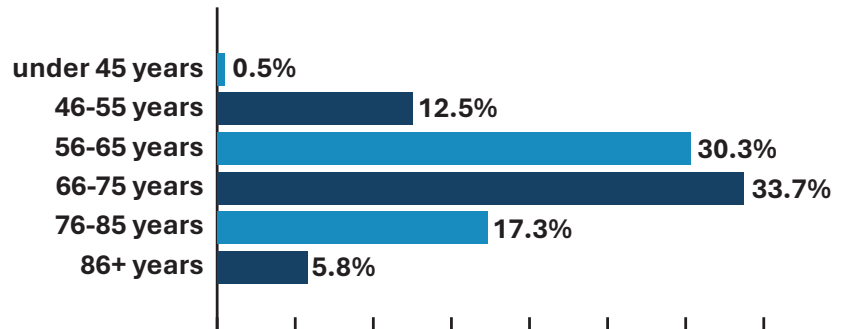
Who we heard from

The MySay survey was completed by a diverse audience:

Gender



Age

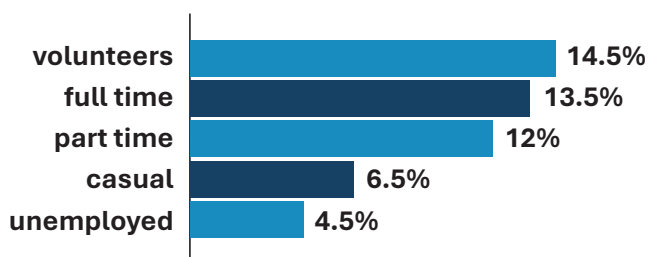


Identities

- **47.5%** identified as earning less than \$650 per week or receiving government assistance (pension or health care card)
- **26%** identified as living with disability or chronic health condition
- **17%** identified as having caring responsibilities
- **12%** born overseas and **5%** speaking a language other than English
- **2.5%** identified as LGBTI+
- **2%** identified as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander

Occupation

We also asked people about their occupation status:



Data collection limitations

Other than data collected via the community survey, most other data was collected from people who were attending events or activities for people aged 55 years and over. Due to the nature of these alternative collection methods, specific demographic data was not collected.

The Community Response

– Overarching Themes

Throughout the consultation, participants shared valuable insights about what is important to help people age well in Ballarat.

Community feedback was analysed both thematically and through the lens of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Age-friendly Cities Framework. This approach enabled us to identify the key issues, strengths and opportunities raised by participants, while also understanding how these align with the internationally recognised domains that contribute to age-friendly communities.

Across the survey, in-person engagement and other methods, the following overarching themes emerged:

Connection and belonging

Social participation, volunteering, lifelong learning, intergenerational connections and welcoming community spaces are central to wellbeing and a sense of belonging. Participants valued opportunities for in-person learning, engagement and social interaction that fosters meaningful relationships and strengthens community connections.

Participants noted the importance of inclusive opportunities that are flexible, affordable and welcoming. Connection was supported through local groups and clubs, and in less structured ways through friendships and knowing your neighbours, and in community gathering places such as libraries, community hubs and local businesses.

Natural environments were also recognised as important for both social connection and wellbeing. Participants highlighted connections with nature including trees, birds and wildlife and shared use of spaces for outdoor activities such as bushwalking and exploring local environments.

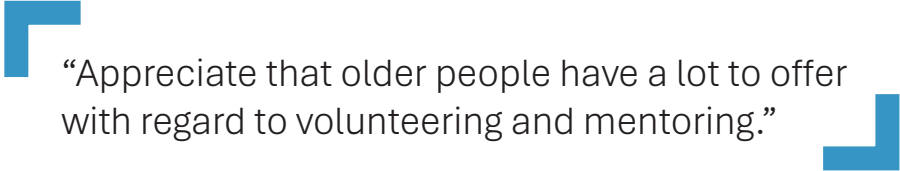
However, loneliness and social isolation were raised as concerns, particularly for people living alone, those who had lost a partner or friends, and those with limited transport options. More broadly, social isolation appears significant, with 8% of survey participants reporting no opportunities to connect socially in Ballarat and a further 19% unsure whether such opportunities exist.

“As you get older, it’s harder to meet people and make new friends and form connections.”

Valuing diversity and contributions

Participants challenged traditional views of ageing, preferring a focus on strengths, opportunities and continued contribution rather than decline or dependency. They valued meaningful opportunities for social participation, employment, learning, physical activity, leadership and volunteering.

Ageism was identified as a key issue. Participants called for greater consideration of older people during planning, more visible and positive representations of ageing including moving beyond traditional programming to placing fun at the centre of activities, challenging ageist attitudes including related to technology use, in the workplace and the wider community, and recognising older people as contributors in addition to being recipients of services.



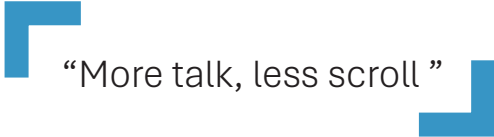
“Appreciate that older people have a lot to offer with regard to volunteering and mentoring.”

Information and Communication

People access information in different ways and want it to be easy to find, relevant, trustworthy and available through both digital and non-digital channels. Confidence, skills and access to digital technology vary widely. While many people value online information and services, others face barriers to access or prefer non-digital options.

Not hearing about information or not hearing it early enough was identified as a barrier by almost 59% of survey participants, while not being confident using technology was a barrier for only 18% of survey participants. Just over 34% of people indicated that they wanted more technology skill learning opportunities, with the highest request in this area being for people aged 76 years and over.

Overall, participants called for timely, accessible and easy to find information in a range of formats, to support participation, independence and informed decision-making.



“More talk, less scroll ”



Safety

Safety was a key priority across consultations, with participants emphasising the importance of feeling safe at home, in neighbourhoods, public spaces and the wider community to support active participation in community life.

Affordable and accessible services that enable people to remain safe and independent at home were considered essential. Participants raised concerns about long waiting lists, service gaps and, for some, housing security.

Accessible public spaces were valued, although concerns about anti-social behaviour, crime and safety at night were also reported. Safe and reliable transport, including well-maintained footpaths, crossings, lighting, seating, road conditions and places to park close by, were identified as crucial for mobility and independence.

“Ballarat is a beautiful town and I would like to feel safe and secure.”

The Community Response – Aligned with WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework

From the survey responses in conjunction with all other engagement, the following themes have emerged, as aligned with each of the WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework domains.

Transport

Transport was identified as essential for independence, participation and wellbeing. Participants highlighted the importance of reliable, accessible and affordable transport to access services, activities and everyday supports. While driving can support independence, many expressed concern about future reliance on public, community and active transport as their needs change.

Key concerns included limited public transport coverage and frequency, poor access from growth and outer areas, and insufficient connection to key destinations such as health and medical facilities. Other barriers to safe and confident travel included overcrowded trains, limited parking, parking costs, road congestion, damaged road surfaces, speeding, unsafe crossings, poor lighting, and anti-social behaviour.

Footpaths, walkability and pedestrian infrastructure were consistently identified as critical to an age-friendly city. Participants emphasised the need for well-maintained, connected and unobstructed footpaths, safer crossings, kerb ramps, seating, shade, lighting, public toilets at transport hubs, and infrastructure suitable for walkers, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other mobility devices. Walking and cycling paths were valued for supporting exercise, recreation, social connection and access to local services.

Suggested improvements included more frequent and reliable bus services, improved transport information, greater accessibility at bus stops and expanded community transport options.

“I cannot go for a walk now without a walking stick so as we are an ageing inner-city area more units = more people walking and not using cars!”



Community Support and Health Services

Health and community support services emerged as central to ageing well in Ballarat. People value the availability of local hospitals, doctors, allied health, pharmacies, community health and practical supports, particularly where these services help older people remain independent, active and connected to community life.

A consistent message was the desire to age in place with dignity, choice and confidence. Achieving this requires timely, affordable and accessible services close to where people live, including in-home support, domestic assistance, home maintenance, gardening, meal preparation, transport to get to appointments and clear information to help navigate service systems.

Key concerns include long waiting times, service availability, affordability, pressure on hospitals and doctors, limited bulk-billing options, potential travel requirements for specialist care, transport barriers, parking constraints and inequitable access across some suburbs. Stakeholders noted that while a good range of services exist, barriers such as cost, waiting lists, transport and system navigation prevent people from accessing the support they need.

Preventative health, wellbeing and social connection were identified as important contributors to healthy ageing and reduced isolation. Exercise programs, aquatic facilities, walking and cycling infrastructure, chronic disease management, mental health support and opportunities for social participation were identified as important enablers of healthy ageing and reduced isolation.

“My Aged Care is a growing problem - too long to get access, not enough help soon enough and too big wait times.”

Social Participation

Older residents value affordable, accessible and welcoming opportunities that support connection, participation, physical activity, lifelong learning and belonging.

Reducing loneliness and social isolation emerged as a key priority. While not all participants used the word “loneliness”, many described experiences or concerns linked to living alone, loss of partners or friends, limited transport, being new to Ballarat, or continuing to work later in life. People are seeking regular and meaningful opportunities to build friendships, maintain social networks and participate in community life.

Everyday places and activities were identified as important enablers of social connection and community participation. These settings were valued not only for the activities they offer, but also for fostering inclusion, safety, connection and belonging.

Access and inclusion remain critical enablers of participation. The main barriers identified through the survey were lack of information, timing of classes, cost, confidence, ease of access and transport. Additional feedback highlighted further barriers such as carer responsibilities, the proximity of activities, and the need for both digital and non-digital information about what is available.

Survey results indicate strong interest in a broad mix of learning and participation opportunities. The most requested learning areas were health and wellbeing education, creative arts, technology skills, work and volunteering skills, intergenerational learning, cultural and language classes, housing, life transitions and transport confidence. Preferences varied across age groups, reinforcing the need for flexible, inclusive and locally responsive programming.

Existing City of Ballarat and community offerings are well regarded, including exercise classes, bus trips, newsletters, information sessions, Seniors Festival activities, libraries, community facilities and Ageing Well Services. Rather than seeking completely new programs, many respondents generally supported maintaining and improving existing offerings. Instead, the feedback points to opportunities to maintain what works, improve promotion, increase frequency, broaden geographic reach, and make activities more inclusive for people with different interests, life stages, access needs and levels of confidence.

Intergenerational connection also emerged as an important opportunity. Some interest was identified in school partnerships, mentoring opportunities, shared learning and multi-generational events.

This points to the value of programs that move beyond age-specific activities and support stronger relationships across the whole community.

“Interesting social options that aren’t the ‘elderly’ norm, mentoring opportunities, sport/ fitness programs, financial advice.”

Respect and Social Inclusion

Respect and social inclusion emerged as fundamental components of ageing well in Ballarat. Older people want to live in a community where they are valued, visible, safe and able to participate fully in everyday life. Feedback strongly supports a strengths-based approach that recognises older people as contributors, leaders, volunteers, workers, learners and active community members.

Respondents described inclusive communities as places where people look out for one another, neighbours are willing to help, community spaces are welcoming, and older people feel accepted while maintaining their cultural values, identity and independence. Social connection was viewed as fundamental to wellbeing, dignity, confidence and mental health. People are seeking practical infrastructure for connection, not only formal social programs.

Respect for older people was another consistent priority. Participants called for non-ageist attitudes, recognition of older people's contributions, inclusion in planning and decision-making, and greater visibility in community life. There is a clear desire to challenge assumptions about ageing, including assumptions about technology skills, capacity, interests and contribution. Age-friendly Ambassador insights also reinforced the value of continuing action to challenge ageism and empower older people, including opportunities to promote age-friendly practice with local businesses.

Inclusion, diversity and safety are important enablers of participation. The need for culturally safe and identity-affirming spaces was identified. Concerns were raised about racism, discrimination, stigma, less welcoming groups, crime, anti-social behaviour, and safety. Feeling safe, respected and free from discrimination was seen as essential to older people's ability to participate in community life.

Practical access also shapes inclusion. Respondents identified affordable activities, accessible venues, reliable transport, clear information, trusted support and non-digital options as important foundations for participation. Concerns included poor public transport, complex digital systems, service gaps, waiting times and limited access to services and information. Accessibility was consistently viewed as essential to inclusion.



“Don’t assume older people are incompetent, lacking technological skills or that all older people can’t do anything for themselves.”



Communication and Information

Community feedback identified communication and access to information as fundamental enablers of ageing well in Ballarat. Participants emphasised the importance of timely, accessible and inclusive information that helps older people remain connected to services, activities, learning opportunities and their community. Access to information was seen as critical to reducing isolation, supporting independence and enabling participation in community life.

Easy access to well-promoted information through multiple channels emerged as a clear priority. Residents reported that they often miss opportunities because they do not hear about them early enough, with almost 59% of survey respondents identifying lack of timely awareness as a barrier to participation. Community members expressed a preference for a centralised and trusted source of information that brings together services, supports, events and activities, supported by clear promotion and reminders.

While digital communication was widely supported, participants emphasised that information should also be available through non-digital channels. Feedback highlighted that digital-only approaches can exclude people who have limited internet access, low digital confidence, concerns about privacy and scams, or who simply prefer non-digital forms of communication. Residents requested continued access to printed newsletters, brochures, flyers, mail-outs, community noticeboards and telephone contact options alongside online information sources.

Libraries were consistently identified as important community assets, serving as trusted hubs for information, learning, connection and digital support. Strong interest was identified in face-to-face information sharing, one-to-one assistance, community talks and digital literacy programs. Levels of digital confidence and access vary considerably among older residents, highlighting the need for ongoing digital inclusion initiatives.

Stakeholders reinforced concerns about navigating complex service systems, including My Aged Care and other government services. Lack of awareness of available supports, poor communication, inaccessible formats, and language or literacy barriers were identified as ongoing challenges. Participants emphasised the value of clear, plain-language information, and practical support to help people navigate services and major life transitions such as retirement.

Feedback also highlighted opportunities to strengthen communication through intergenerational approaches, broader community outreach and campaigns that challenge ageism and promote respect for older people. Residents wanted communication that recognises older people as active contributors to community life and supports connection across generations.

“During Seniors Week have a drop-in centre so we can get information and speak to people for advice.”

Housing

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of safe, secure and affordable housing that enables independence, wellbeing and connection to community. Housing was closely connected to broader issues about cost of living, health, transport and social inclusion.

A strong theme was the desire to age in place. Residents expressed a preference to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible but noted that this requires access to practical and affordable support services. Participants identified the need for assistance to help maintain independence and remain safely at home.

Housing affordability and security were identified as significant long-term concerns. Feedback highlighted rising housing costs, rental affordability pressures, housing insecurity and fears of homelessness. Some participants were concerned about securing or maintaining suitable housing as they age, particularly in the context of increasing costs associated with rates, utilities, food, healthcare and general living expenses.

A greater diversity of housing options was identified as a priority. There was support for smaller, lower-maintenance homes located near services, transport, healthcare and social opportunities. Participants highlighted the importance of planning for a broader mix of housing types and densities that respond to changing needs as people age. Suggestions included alternative housing models, village-style developments, more downsizing opportunities and changes that support ageing in place.

The availability and quality of affordable and public housing was another issue raised. Concerns were raised regarding housing vulnerability among older people, particularly older women experiencing financial hardship or major life transitions. Affordable rental options and housing security for single older women were specifically identified as priorities by some participants.

Safety was also identified as a key component of housing security and wellbeing. Participants described the importance of living in secure neighbourhoods and having confidence in their surrounding community. Concerns included crime, anti-social behaviour, home security, unsafe public spaces and neighbourhood environments that may discourage participation and independence.

Feedback highlighted the strong relationship between housing, wellbeing and social connection. Participants noted that housing location, transport access and proximity to services influence people's ability to remain socially connected and engaged. At the same time, respondents raised concerns about the potential impacts of new housing development, including traffic congestion, loss of green space, parking pressures and increased demand on community infrastructure and health services.

“A healthy balance of different kinds, models and density of housing – keeping ahead of demographic patterns and projections.”

Civic Participation and Employment

Community feedback highlighted civic participation, volunteering and employment as important contributors to healthy ageing, social connection and community wellbeing. Meaningful participation was seen as important to maintaining purpose, sharing skills and knowledge, and staying connected to the community. Participants expressed a desire to be recognised as valuable contributors and community assets rather than solely as recipients of services.

A key theme was the role of work, volunteering and community contribution in fostering social connection. Participants identified volunteering as an important pathway for social engagement, skill-sharing and participation, while also recognising that workforce participation can create barriers to involvement in community activities and events that are primarily offered during business hours. Feedback highlighted the need for more flexible options that accommodate employment, caring responsibilities and changing life circumstances.

Feedback reflected the increasing reality that many people are working longer, often due to financial pressures. Participants noted the ongoing value of older workers and raised concerns about ageism, barriers to employment and limited pathways for mature-age workers to remain engaged in the workforce.

Survey results suggest that residents generally feel there are opportunities to connect socially and volunteer in Ballarat, with 75.5% identifying opportunities to volunteer. Confidence was lower in relation to participation in decision-making (44%) and opportunities to use skills in paid or unpaid roles (54%), indicating scope to strengthen community engagement pathways and opportunities for meaningful contribution.

Greater involvement in community and Council decision-making emerged as a priority. Genuine consultation, transparency and opportunities for direct engagement were identified as critical enablers of participation. Residents were more likely to participate when they believed their views were valued, the issue was relevant, and they felt capable of influencing outcomes. Trust, transparency and genuine engagement were identified as critical to participation.

Community workshop feedback highlighted the importance of human connection and accessible engagement opportunities. Libraries were identified as trusted community hubs that provide both information and digital support. Participants strongly supported face-to-face engagement opportunities, including one-to-one support, small-group learning and more personalised ways to connect with Council and community organisations.

“Have you any programs where older people become the ‘owners and drivers’ of the programs?”

Places, Spaces and Buildings

Safe, accessible and welcoming places, spaces and buildings were identified as essential to ageing well in Ballarat. Participants consistently linked the quality of the built and natural environment to independence, health, wellbeing, and social connection. Residents value neighbourhoods that are safe, walkable, clean and well-maintained, with access to local services, community facilities and green open spaces.

A strong theme was the importance of safety in public spaces. Community members identified feeling safe in neighbourhoods, parks, streets and public facilities as critical to maintaining confidence and independence. Concerns included anti-social behaviour, crime, intimidation, and perceptions of safety, particularly at night. Safe and welcoming environments were seen as essential for community participation and social connection.

Ballarat's natural environment, parks and open spaces were strongly valued for their contribution to physical activity, social connection and wellbeing. These spaces were recognised as important community assets that support relaxation, physical activity, social interaction and mental wellbeing. Participants also suggested opportunities to further activate parks and reserves through guided walks, birdwatching activities and local outdoor social events.

Accessibility emerged as a priority. Survey findings indicate that barriers to participation are often linked to the built environment and access. Accessibility of venues was identified as a challenge by almost one in five respondents (19.7%). Participants emphasised the need for age-friendly buildings and public infrastructure that accommodate changing mobility needs. Features such as level access, handrails, accessible parking, well-maintained footpaths, safe crossings and easy-to-navigate facilities were identified as essential. Libraries, community centres, and health services were highlighted as particularly valued accessible destinations. Stakeholders also raised concerns about missing footpaths, unsafe bluestone gutters and recreation facilities that do not adequately cater for older users.

Community members highly valued social infrastructure that supports gathering, learning and participation. Libraries, neighbourhood houses, community hubs, community halls, arts venues and sporting facilities were viewed as important places. There was strong support for improving access to affordable and well-funded community gathering spaces that foster inclusion and a sense of belonging.

Recreation and fitness infrastructure was also viewed as important to healthy ageing. Participants called for improved aquatic and hydrotherapy facilities, affordable recreation options, age-friendly gym access, more exercise programs and further outdoor exercise equipment.

“One of the biggest opportunities for Ballarat is to focus less on creating new infrastructure and more on linking and activating what already exists.”



In conclusion

The engagement undertaken between March and June 2026 provided valuable insight into the experiences, priorities and aspirations of older people in Ballarat. The findings identified both the strengths that support ageing well and the barriers affecting independence, participation and wellbeing.

Key priorities included transport, health and community support services, housing, social connection, accessible information and age-friendly places and spaces.

Importantly, the findings reinforce the value of a strengths-based approach to ageing, recognising older people as active contributors to community life through their roles as volunteers, workers, carers, mentors and community leaders.

What's next?

The findings from this engagement process are being used to inform the next Ageing Well in Ballarat Strategy 2027-2030 and Action Plan.

A summary of these engagement findings will be shared with the community in August 2026 via the MySay page. This information will also be shared with the Age-friendly Ambassadors and City of Ballarat teams to help inform business unit planning, where relevant, including strategic plans that are open for engagement.



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All information correct at time of publication.
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