

Submission to

The Coordinator

Strategic Implementation Unit,

City of Greater Geelong

Submission from

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I write in support of the proposal to Amend Clause 21.14 Bellarine Peninsula to include in "Further Work", an additional requirement "Undertake a strategic assessment to identify aged care needs across the Bellarine Peninsula, identifying design options and guidance to encourage older people to remain in their homes as long as possible through adaptable housing design."

I request also that a timeline and deadline be placed upon preparation of the proposed strategic needs assessment and that older residents of the City of Greater Geelong be engaged at all stages in the development of the strategic plan.

Unfortunately numerous requests from community organisations, including the Portarlington Community Association and the positive ageing group Staying-in-Portarlington Inc. for such work over many years have resulted only in Council statements of intent but no action. Further, Council has failed to advocate for build for life/universal housing design principles to be followed in both single dwellings and age-specific residential facilities .

Priority for this work, in conjunction with the community, is particularly significant in Portarlington because of:

- the population demographics with 46.4% aged over 60 - more than double than for Geelong as a whole
- a high proportion of older residents living alone
- changes to Commonwealth and State government policies placing emphasis on ageing in place and therefore funding preference to community aged care services to people within their own homes rather than to residential care
- government policy now supporting active ageing and rights of older people

- the absence of mandated access and adaptable design codes at State and Commonwealth levels
- recent and current housing developments that lack appropriate accessible and adaptable design features and therefore will be unsuitable for life-long living
- the requirement for Council to make future planning decisions for aged care provisions within a policy framework rather than in a vacuum, or based on assumptions as occurred with The Portarlington Strategic Plan 2006-16 and the Mercer-Oxley Sts retirement village application

It is suggested the the City of Greater Geelong should utilise the Victorian Building Commission's design template, Build for Life, A Voluntary Guide To Promote The Design And Construction Of Accessible Homes. The template covers such areas as entry to property, internal and external doorways, circulation spaces, bathroom and toilet access, switches and power points and door hardware plus a wide range of handy access hints. When released it was estimated the costs were low if access features were incorporated at the design stage, but would cost 22 times more to achieve through later renovations.

The Victorian Universal Housing Alliance has called on the Victorian Government to ensure that at least one quarter of all Victorian housing will meet a universal standard by 2031 and notes that several Victorian Councils have developed planning amendments to comply with universal standards without waiting for state government approval. The Australian Network for Universal Housing Design, noting that voluntary compliance agreed to by housing industry leaders in 2010 to the following three access steps has not been adhered to, is now seeking their inclusion in the National Construction Code.

1. An accessible path of travel from the street or parking area to and within the entry level of the dwelling
2. Doors, corridors and living spaces that allow for ease of access for most people on the entry level
3. A bathroom, shower and toilet than can be used by most people with reinforced wall areas for grab rails at a later date

In conclusion, I support the Amendment's proposal for further work in aged care needs including identifying housing design options to promote access and adaptations coupled with followup actions to develop community awareness of the benefits of building for life and to ensure implementation and compliance by developers, architects and builders.