



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA**



# Successful Planning for Age-friendly Communities in Western Australia

Evaluation of the Department of  
Local Government and Communities  
Age-friendly Communities Local  
Government Grants Program

Summary report  
October 2017



## Executive Summary

More and more people around the world are living longer and older people make up a growing proportion of the world's population. Global demographic change caused by population ageing has become a topic of concern that demands action from international, national, regional and local policy makers.

Recognising this challenge, the World Health Organisation (WHO) developed the Age-friendly Cities and Communities approach as a best practice model. This is a globally recognised method for developing appropriate policy responses tailored to local conditions that are based on bottom-up participatory community consultation.

Western Australia is a national leader in age-friendly planning at the local government level. Between 2006 and 2016 the Western Australia Department of Local Government and Communities (DLGC) - including the former Department for Communities - funded local governments in Western Australia to conduct age-friendly research and planning in their local government areas.

Under the Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program, a total of \$473,200 was allocated to 70 of the 139 local governments in Western Australia over this 10 year period.

- 75.5 percent of Western Australia seniors (60+) live in a local government area funded to conduct age-friendly planning under the grants program (ABS 2016).
- This includes 81.2 percent of those living in metropolitan Perth and 59.3 percent of those living in regional Western Australia.

In June 2017, the Government of Western Australia became an affiliate member of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC). WA is the only Australian state or territory with this status.

DLGC commissioned researchers from the University of Western Australia to undertake a qualitative and systematic review of the Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program in January 2017. This report represents a summary of findings of that review process. A full report is available on request.

## Findings and analysis

The grants program was part of a broader DLGC seniors strategy that aimed to create an age-friendly Western Australia. Research conducted for this evaluation clearly confirms that the grants program has delivered substantial change through local government sector engagement that has contributed to the successful achievement of this objective.

Engagement with the age-friendly approach has transformed the ways in which the Western Australian local government sector approaches support and service delivery to seniors living in the community. The grants program funding activity, in particular, has been a central component in raising awareness and encouraging local governments in WA to adopt this new approach. Together with other DLGC initiatives, as well as those of other agencies and organisations, this funding has driven the broad cultural and attitudinal change needed to create an age-friendly WA, providing a new lens through which to understand ageing and a new language to support change and innovation in planning for age-friendly communities.

Since the first four age-friendly local government pilots were funded by DoC in 2006-2009, the enthusiasm and commitment in the sector around this approach has gathered momentum. In addition to the 70 local governments that received funding under the grants program there are many more local governments that have developed an Age-friendly Community Plan, undertaken an age-friendly community audit, or incorporated the age-friendly methodology into their seniors community consultation without formally branding their work age-friendly.

The results of this evaluation can be summarised into ten key findings:

1. Ageing communities are a critical concern for local governments, now and into the future. The WHO age-friendly approach is the current best practice response to drive targeted interventions. Close and continued engagement with WHO supports continued success at State and local government levels.
2. The age-friendly approach must be tailored to suit local conditions and adequately respond to current and future needs of older people living in the community. Local governments in WA have developed creative solutions that address gaps in the age-friendly approach.
3. Success in adopting the age-friendly approach in WA is due to State Government support, including funding through the grants program, and the resultant unique partnership between State and local government.
4. Passionate champions provide leadership and guide change, along with strong collegial networks supported by State Government, key local governments, and Local Government Professionals WA.
5. Support from other State agencies, including Regional Development Commissions, as well as influential non-governmental actors, has been critical to establishing the age-friendly approach, particularly in regional Western Australia.

6. Partnerships with consultants can facilitate consistency and rigour in the development of Age-friendly Community Plans. However, not all consultants deliver the same high standards.
7. Consortia of local governments can be effective partnerships to make the most of limited resources and develop collaborative solutions, however poor communication can result in disruptive and wasteful collaboration.
8. There is an acute need to address diversity among seniors, through effective engagement and consultation with representatives and communities. This is a significant gap in the age-friendly approach that requires targeted responses.
9. Interdepartmental collaboration and executive support within local governments is needed to embed age-friendly policy in strategic community planning.
10. The grants program has emphasised planning, but ongoing implementation and evaluation of age-friendly initiatives are equally important. Future measurable success requires identification of the right resources and techniques to respond to changing needs as local governments create more age-friendly communities into the future.

### **Key recommendations**

These are a synopsis of the extended recommendations detailed in Section 6 of the full report.

- a) Continue to promote age-friendly as the best practice response to address strategic planning for age-friendly communities. Celebrate Western Australian age-friendly success and promote the benefits of joining WHO GNAFFC.
- b) Review, revise and update the WA age-friendly toolkit, drawing on the expertise of local government officers. Create an online resource repository where local governments can share tools and survey instruments that they have developed and adapted. Develop a simpler, more defined approach for local governments with fewer resources.
- c) Cement the Government of Western Australia's reputation as age-friendly leader nationally and globally through profile building exercises that celebrate WA success in age-friendly, including events and high impact publications.
- d) Continue to support networking and training opportunities for local government officers working in age-friendly, particularly through Local Government Professionals (LGP) WA Age-friendly Network. Promote the age-friendly approach through other networks, including Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA) events, LGP WA Community Development networks and events.

- e) Maintain close partnerships with regional agencies to ensure programs and approaches are complementary and not competing. Develop tailored approaches for different regions; accept and support regional priorities.
- f) Develop targeted approaches for age-friendly consultation with special interest groups, including CALD, Indigenous and LGBTIQ seniors. Collaborate with state agencies, community organisations, representative bodies, and local governments to ensure culturally sensitive inclusion. Produce resources to support local government officers engaging with diverse seniors.
- g) Promote age-friendly through different forums to ensure the approach is understood and supported by executives, councillors and other leaders in local governments, not just Community Services (e.g., through events like WALGA and LGP WA conferences). Promote age-friendly to the public as well as within the local government sector.
- h) Support local governments in moving beyond age-friendly planning; ongoing implementation, monitoring and evaluation are the essential next steps in creating age-friendly communities. Develop simple tools and / or recommended core indicators that can help local governments to conduct reviews and measure progress against age-friendly plans over time.
- i) Celebrate and promote success in age-friendly implementation, including local governments at different stages in the process. Small incremental wins add up to significant change and tangible improvements for older people living in their communities.

## Conclusions

In addition to key findings and recommendations, this evaluation highlights four emerging areas that are critical to the evolution of the age-friendly approach in coming years.

**Measurable success and continual improvement:** in line with new research from WHO, best practice in age-friendly will entail using core indicators to deliver baseline data and measure success in creating age-friendly environments.

**Diverse seniors and tailored solutions:** seniors' diversity issues are often overlooked in age friendly planning. New adaptations of the age-friendly approach will need to explicitly address multiple diversity issues for seniors as a key dimension of success in creating age-friendly communities.

**Ageism, public communications strategies and normalising age-friendly language:** extending the language of age-friendly beyond practitioners and policy makers will drive public support for age-friendly initiatives, while tackling ageism and reducing residual stigma.

Digital citizenship among seniors and an age-friendly future: accessing current information about services and local activities increasingly requires digital literacy. Supporting digital citizenship for older people is an essential component in creating an age-friendly future.

In conclusion, the DLGC Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program (2006-16) has been a successful driver of change in local government responses to an ageing population. In many parts of the State, but particularly in the South West, the Wheatbelt and metropolitan Perth, there has been strong sector engagement with the age-friendly approach. In no other Australian jurisdiction have so many local government areas applied the age-friendly lens to their strategic community planning. The formal recognition of the Government of Western Australia as an affiliate member of the WHO GNAFCC is a strong endorsement of its successful planning for age-friendly communities in the State.

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## Introduction, aims and background

### Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program: A Summary

Western Australia has a rapidly ageing population and is facing significant demographic change as a result. In August 2016, there were 478,327 people aged 60 years and over living in the state (ABS, 2016). By 2021, this number will reach nearly 595,000, and one in five West Australians will be aged 60 years or over. This is predicted to rise again to one in four by 2041 (DLGC, 2013).

The age-friendly approach is the World Health Organisation's globally recognised model for developing appropriate policy responses tailored to local conditions that are based on bottom-up participatory community consultation.

Between 2006 and 2016 the Western Australian Department of Local Government and Communities (including the former Department for Communities) funded 70 local governments to conduct research and planning to create more age-friendly communities in their local government areas. The Department also funded nine of these local governments to conduct implementation projects based on their research findings. A total of \$473,200 was allocated to Western Australian local governments during this period under a series of five funding rounds:

**Round 1:** Pre-2010 Age-friendly Communities pilot funding

**Round 2:** Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program 2010

**Round 3:** Age-friendly Communities Local Government Project Implementation Grants 2011

**Round 4:** Age-friendly Communities Regional Local Government Strategic Planning Grants Program 2014-2015

**Round 5:** Age-friendly Communities Planning Grants 2015-16

See Table 1 for an overview of each of these five funding rounds.

Although there have been small variances in the objectives, funding criteria, and targeted local governments between each of these funding rounds, the overarching goal throughout the Age-friendly Communities Grants Program has been **the creation of an age-friendly Western Australia.**

**Table 1 Summary of local governments funded under the Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program 2006-2016**

<b>Funding Round</b>	<b>Local Governments Funded</b>		<b>Funds Allocated</b>
<b>Round 1: Pre-2010 pilot funding</b>	Augusta-Margaret River Mandurah	Melville Rockingham	\$40,000
<b>Round 2: Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program 2010</b>	Bayswater Busselton Capel Carnarvon Claremont Cockburn Cottesloe Denmark Dumbleyung Fremantle Kwinana Lake Grace	Moora Mosman park Nannup Peppermint Grove Perth Subiaco Swan Wagin West Arthur Williams Woodanilling	\$120,000
<b>Round 3: Age-friendly Communities Local Government Project Implementation Grants 2011</b>	Busselton Cockburn Fremantle Lake Grace Nannup	Perth Wagin West Arthur Williams	\$70,000
<b>Round 4: Age-Friendly Communities Regional Local Government Strategic Planning Grants Program 2014-2015</b>	Bridgetown- Greenbushes Bruce Rock Bunbury Chittering Corrigin Dandaragan Dardanup Esperance Gingin Goomalling Harvey Irwin Kondinin Koorda Kulin	Manjimup Merredin Mount Marshall Mukinbudin Murray Narembeen Narrogin ( S) Narrogin (T) Nungarin Toodyay Trayning Victoria Plains Waroona Wickepin Wyalkatchem	\$129,700
<b>Round 5: Age-friendly Communities Planning Grants 2015-16</b>	Armadale Beverley Brookton Canning Collie Dalwallinu Joondalup	Kalamunda Pingelly Stirling Vincent Wanneroo York	\$113,500

At the time this evaluation was conducted in the first half of 2017, the DLGC Age-friendly Communities Grants Program had two more rounds of funding underway:

**Round 6:** a new round of Age-friendly Communities Planning Grants for the financial year 2017-18 closed on 31 March 2017. These grants are offered under the same application criteria as the 2015-16 funding round.

**Round 7:** a first round of Age-friendly Communities Innovation and Implementation Grants closed on 31 March 2017. Under this round of funding, grants of up to \$20,000 per project are available for local governments to implement their age-friendly plans, or other strategies that promote active and positive ageing.

These two latest rounds are largely out of scope for the evaluation analysis detailed in this report because the grants had not yet been awarded at the time of writing.

However, evaluation research participants have referred to these two most recent rounds of funding, particularly in consultation interviews with local government officers. These latest rounds are, then, part of the broader context in which this evaluation research is conducted. Age-friendly planning in Western Australia continues to evolve and so readers should be aware that this evaluation report represents a snapshot of a dynamic and rapidly changing field.

### What is an age-friendly community?

The age-friendly approach is a globally recognised model developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which entails ‘bottom-up’ participatory consultation that can inform planning to deliver improved outcomes for seniors living in a community. A fuller discussion of the WHO work in this field is detailed in section 2 of the full report. Here we provide a brief overview to contextualise the scope of the evaluation.

The DLGC Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-2017 for an age-friendly WA defines an age-friendly community as one which:

- recognises the great diversity among older people
- promotes their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life
- respects their decisions and lifestyle choices and
- anticipates and responds flexibly to ageing-related needs and preferences.

In an age-friendly community, there is a culture of inclusion shared by people of all ages and ability levels.

The WHO age-friendly approach developed out of the WHO (2002) policy framework for Active Ageing and the findings from the WHO Age-friendly Cities Programme, a global

research pilot that in 2006-2007 trialled the age-friendly approach in 33 cities around the globe, including Melville in Western Australia.

Active ageing is defined as “the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (WHO, 2002). Policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable older people to ‘age actively’, that is, to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society.

### **Grants program aims and objectives**

The overarching goal of the DLGC Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program is the creation of an age-friendly Western Australia. This can be achieved through the optimisation of opportunities for health, participation and security by establishing policies, services and structures that improve the quality of life of community members as they age.

Creating an age-friendly community involves the three phases of planning, implementation and evaluation, as outlined in the WHO age-friendly cycle of continual improvement. The grants program has focussed primarily on planning, the first of these phases.

Following the WHO principle that bottom-up participatory consultation is the critical first step towards understanding the locally-specific needs and perspectives of older people, the primary aim of the grants program between 2006-16 has been to assist local governments in gathering and analysing information to inform planning for age-friendly communities.

Having completed this first planning phase, local governments funded under the grants program can address the next phase, implementation, through usual business activities and prioritising projects that meet local needs using available resources. DLGC has offered funding for implementation only under Rounds 3 and 7 of the grants program.

### **Age-friendly grants activities**

#### *Grants activities: Rounds 1,2,4 and 5*

With the exception of Round 3, all of the funding allocated through the grants program between 2006 and 2016 has been for research and planning activities, and not to fund implementation projects. These four rounds of planning funding supported local governments to develop a road-map for ongoing implementation work that could then be conducted as part of the usual business of the local government area.

While there were some small differences between the grant activities and acquittal requirements of each round of funding, all local governments funded to conduct age-friendly research and planning under Rounds 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the Grants Program were required to:

- form a reference group to guide the research activities
- follow the age-friendly approach in consultation with DLGC (DoC) staff
- develop a community profile with current and predicted demographic information
- conduct workshops, interviews and focus groups to engage local key stakeholders in the research process
- analyse the research findings with reference to the WHO's eight essential features of an age-friendly community, namely:
  - outdoor spaces and buildings
  - transportation
  - housing
  - social participation
  - respect and social inclusion
  - civic participation and employment
  - communication and information
  - community support and health services
- produce an age-friendly research report detailing the research process and the findings
- commit to implementing the findings detailed in the report OR (in later Rounds 4 and 5) demonstrate how the findings detailed in the report would be incorporated into strategic community planning.

The grant activities required under the Grants Program have remained largely consistent throughout Rounds 1, 2, 4 and 5. See Section 4.2 of the full report for a detailed exposition of the objectives and criteria of each of the first five funding rounds.

### *Grants activities: Round 3*

Round 3 of the grants program provided funding for nine local governments to implement an activity or activities that had been identified through age-friendly research conducted under Round 2 of the grants program.

### **Other DLGC activities that have supported the creation of an age-friendly WA**

Alongside the Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program, the Department for Local Government and Communities (including the former Department for Communities) has invested in other activities that support the creation of an age-friendly Western Australia. These activities have informed the work of local governments, raised

awareness and generally helped to promote the new lens, new language and new methods that have been adopted as momentum built around the age-friendly approach.

These activities are summarised here, and their impacts assessed in more detail in Section 5 of the full report.

### *Workshops and forums*

Between 2007 and 2011, the Department for Communities, in collaboration with the City of Melville, held a series of presentations and workshops to introduce local government community development professionals to the age-friendly approach.

DLGC has also hosted more recent workshops that continue to cement its position as the sector leader for the age-friendly approach. The most recent was a day-long age-friendly communities workshop on 28 June 2016. This event attracted over 75 delegates from state and local government, not-for-profit and community organisations, service providers, academics and consultants working in the field.

Following the success of the 2016 event, the State Government hosted another age-friendly communities workshop in July 2017. Close to 120 delegates attended the workshop.

### *An Age-friendly WA: The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-17*

DLGC published a five-year framework in 2012, which articulated a vision “that all Western Australians age well in communities where they matter, belong and contribute”. The framework is underpinned by three planning principles:

- an individual’s choices, rights and dignity are fundamental
- ageing well is a lifelong journey
- ‘ageing in place’ benefits everyone.

It outlines examples of current activity by state government and future directions to create an age-friendly WA. These activities and recommendations are grouped under five key pathways:

- promoting health and wellbeing
- access to essential services
- economic security and protection of rights
- welcoming and well-planned communities
- opportunities to contribute.

Importantly, the Framework articulates the need for everybody, including multiple state agencies and all levels of government, to take responsibility for some of the actions outlined. The Framework identifies the other WA legislation, strategies and programs that impact upon seniors. While it is a DLGC document, it advocates an engaged, whole-of-government approach to creating an age-friendly WA.

### *Local Government Professionals WA Age Friendly Communities Network*

In recognition of the significance and extent of change in approach and work required, in November 2013, DLGC identified the need for a formal network to support the age-friendly approach in Western Australia and engaged the Local Government Managers Association WA (LGMA WA, now Local Government Professionals WA). DLGC provided \$50,000 seed funding for the formation of the Age Friendly Communities Network, formally established in March 2014.

The primary function of the Age Friendly Communities Network is to hold regular age-friendly forums and professional development events. The Age Friendly Communities Network aligns with the WHO framework and approach. Membership of the LG Professionals WA Age Friendly Communities Network is open not only to local government, but State Government representatives, community organisations, and other practitioners working in ageing.

### *Age-friendly Interagency Group (AFIG)*

In 2015, DLGC formed the Age-friendly Interagency Group. The AFIG is comprised of 16 State Government agencies and local government representatives who come together to share information on key issues affecting Western Australian seniors, and develop collaborative strategic responses to ageing. The AFIG meets regularly to promote an age-friendly WA through collaboration across State and local government. The AFIG model is the only one of its kind in Australia and can be credited as a key point of difference in the work being undertaken in Western Australia to support seniors and build age-friendly communities.

The AFIG member agencies, as at 30 June 2017, were:

- Department of Local Government and Communities (Chair and executive support)
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- Department of Finance
- Department of Regional Development
- Department of Planning
- Department of Health
- Department of Treasury (attendance as required)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Transport
- Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Disability Services Commission
- Wheatbelt Development Commission
- Office of Multicultural Interests

- Local Government Professionals, Age-friendly Communities Local Government Network represented by the City of Melville

#### *Alzheimer's Australia WA Social Innovation Grant*

Alzheimer's Australia WA has been funded by the State Government in the financial years 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 to conduct research and develop resources about creating dementia-friendly communities in Western Australia, and to support local governments in applying a dementia-friendly lens to the age-friendly work they are already doing. Integrating dementia-friendly communities principles into age-friendly planning is a model that is unique to Western Australia and may deliver better outcomes than the siloed and stand-alone dementia-friendly communities models seen elsewhere.

#### *WA State Government affiliate membership of WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities*

The State Government of Western Australia has had a close relationship with the WHO Ageing and Life Course Programme since the Department for Communities first supported Melville as a pilot city in the Age Friendly Cities Programme. WHO representatives and affiliates, including Dr Alexandre Kalarche and Dr Jane Barratt, have frequently attended age-friendly events in Western Australian held by DLGC / DoC and the LGP WA Age Friendly Communities Network.

The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-2017 signalled the State Government's first step in the Network cycle of continual improvement.

In June 2017, the WA State Government's work towards making Western Australia more age-friendly was recognised with the World Health Organisation (WHO) accepting the State as an affiliate member of its Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities. See section 2 of the full report for more details about this Network.

Western Australia is the first Australian State or Territory to join this prestigious group, and through this affiliation it is well placed to continue the work of supporting age-friendly communities in Western Australia and worldwide.

## Evaluation aims and objectives

The two key objectives of this evaluation are to:

- a) Consider how effectively the Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program has assisted local governments to gather and analyse information to generate findings to help plan for an age-friendly community.
- b) Consider how effectively the Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program has contributed to the development of age-friendly communities in Western Australia.

The first of these objectives is concerned with the research and planning process. As already noted, the emphasis in the first five rounds of the Grants Program has been on consultation, analysis and planning, and not the implementation of these plans. The initial focus of this evaluation therefore is understanding how effectively this research and planning activity has been conducted, as well as the potential effect of this planning on how councils prioritise and budget for making their communities age-friendly.

The second of these objectives concerns how local governments that have been funded under the Grants Program have incorporated the findings from their age-friendly research into their strategic planning, and how these findings have translated into tangible improvements for seniors living in Western Australian communities.

## Evaluation scope

The scope of this evaluation comprises the DLGC Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program in the period from 2006 to 2016. This includes the 70 local governments that were funded under Rounds 1-5 of the grants program. The focus of this evaluation is to document and assess the impact of these first five rounds, highlight where and how they were successful, explain what underpinned these successes, identify gaps or areas for improvement, and provide recommendations for future directions in creating an age-friendly Western Australia.

This evaluation considers the specific objectives of the grants program, outlined above and detailed in section 4.2. Evaluation research framing questions, developed in response to these objectives, have informed all research activities. These framing questions are detailed in section 3.1 and are primarily concerned with local governments' grant activities in relation to age-friendly consultation, age-friendly research analysis and age-friendly planning.

However, it has become evident throughout the research activities that the grants program has not been the only factor that has influenced the adoption of age-friendly approaches by Western Australian local governments. In many local government areas, the grants program intersected with other initiatives that contributed to age-friendly outcomes.

Therefore, when assessing the impact and outcomes of the grants program, we have also considered a range of other factors, including, for example:

- other DLGC activities, including those detailed above in section 1.2.2
- funding from other sources, including regional development commissions
- advice, financial and in-kind support from other organisations and agencies (see Section 5.5).

This evaluation has thus aimed to both understand the broader context of age-friendly research and implementation activities conducted by funded local governments while also assessing the specific impact that funding under the grants program has had on local governments' engagement with the age-friendly approach.

### Evaluation delimitations

It is important to identify the delimitations of the project, that is, to clarify what is not in scope for evaluation. The evaluation delimitations include the following.

This evaluation assesses the grants program; it does not assess the DLGC Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-17, nor the holistic work of DLGC and other WA State Government agencies in relation to seniors. Where there are other federal, state or local government initiatives, activities or documents that impacted on or intersected with the grants program, this evaluation may explore those relationships but does not seek to measure or delineate in quantifiable terms the effect of each.

This evaluation does not address the age-friendly work of local governments that have been funded under Rounds 6 and 7 of the grants program because at the time the research was conducted they had not yet been awarded. Nor does it address in great detail the age-friendly work of local governments funded under Round 5 as few have yet completed their reports or acquitted the grant. Of the 13 funded under this round, at least three have received extensions and/or have not yet commenced grant activities due to staffing changes.

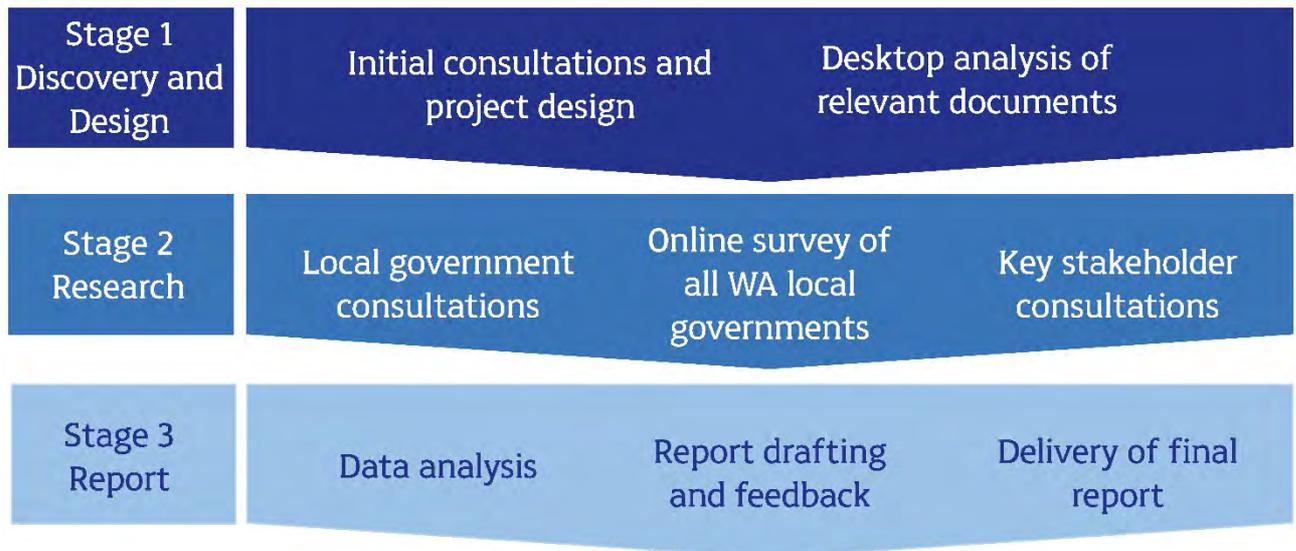
In conducting this evaluation, the research team notes that the primary long-term goal of the grants program, the 'creation of an age-friendly Western Australia' or 'development of age-friendly communities' is aspirational, subjective and not readily measured. Firstly, cultural change of this nature takes time to filter down and long-term effects of the grants program cannot be assessed so soon after the allocation of resources. Secondly, while some measures of an age-friendly community are more easily quantified, particularly in the age-friendly domains that encompass infrastructure and services, the absence of baseline data precludes accurate measurement at this time.

## Evaluation research activities

### Evaluation research design

The research team adopted a three-stage approach to conducting this evaluation. See Figure 1 Evaluation research design for a summary of this approach.

**Figure 1 Evaluation research design**



### Summary of research activities

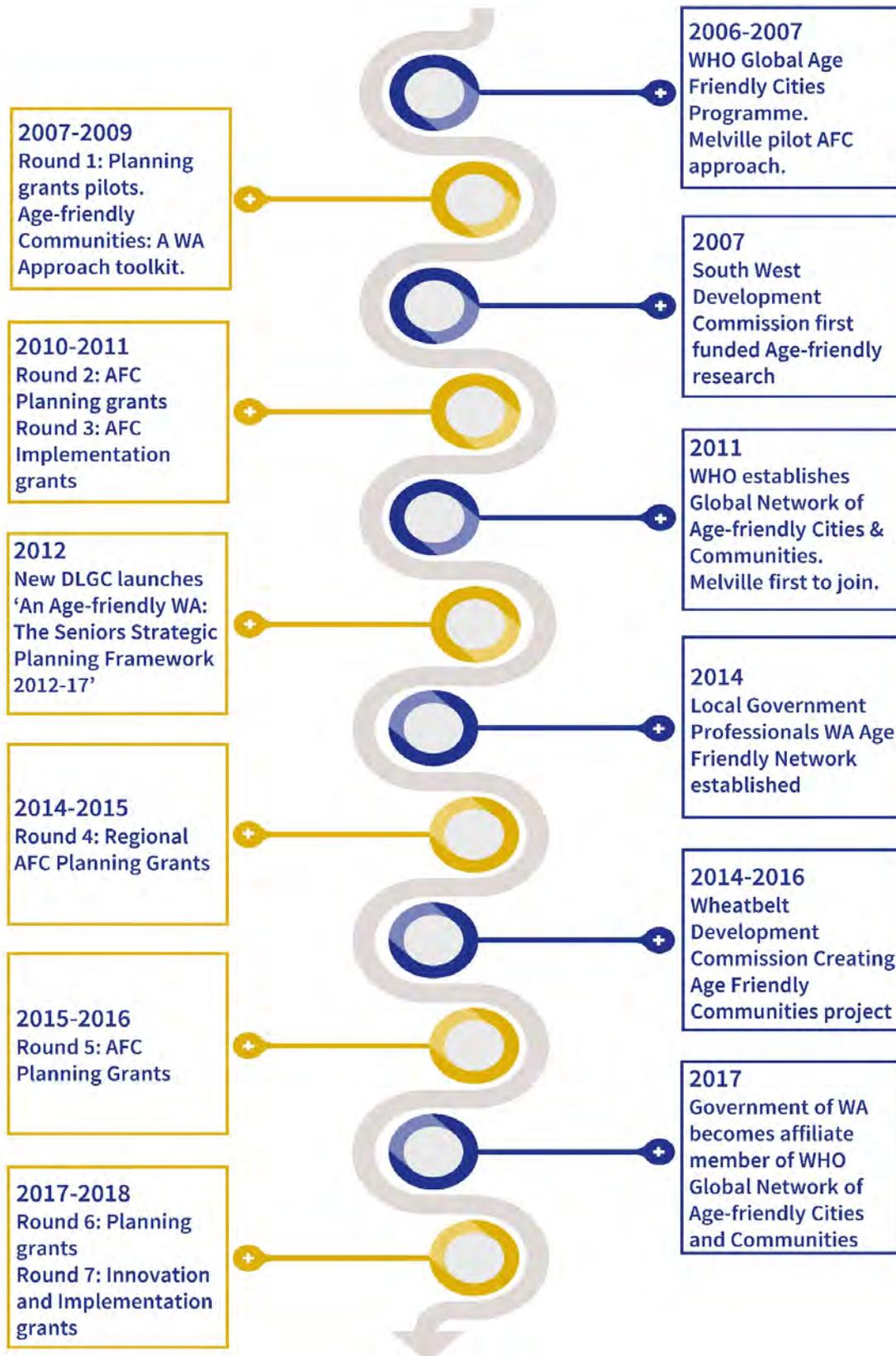
This section details the evaluation research activities conducted in Stages One (Discovery and Design) and Two (Research and Analysis) of this project. Each of these stages are summarised here and explained in more detail below.

**Table 2 Research activities conducted in Stages One (Discovery and Design) and Two (Research and Analysis) of this evaluation project**

Research activity	Summary of research activities
<b>Stage One: Desktop Analysis</b>	Review of all documents related to the Grants Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 41 age-friendly research reports / Age-friendly Community Plans</li> <li>- 10 implementation grant reports</li> <li>- 43 planning grant acquittal reports</li> <li>- Age Friendly Communities: A Western Australian Approach (DoC 2008)</li> <li>- Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide (WHO 2007)</li> <li>- Guidelines and/or application forms for each of the four formal funding rounds</li> </ul> Review of related policies, programs, frameworks and strategies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WHO documents</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National-level documents</li> <li>- WA State-level documents</li> <li>- Regional development commission documents</li> <li>- Local government documents</li> <li>- NGO documents</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Two: Local Government Consultations</b>	<p>Semi-structured interviews with local government officers and managers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 14 interview participants (15 local government areas)</li> </ul> <p>Shorter telephone conversations with local government officers and managers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 14 participants (15 local government areas)</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Two: Online Survey</b>	<p>Online survey distributed to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 139 WA local government areas</li> <li>- regional councils and regional development commissions</li> </ul> <p>Responses were received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 80 local government areas</li> <li>- 3 regional councils and regional development commissions</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Two: Key Stakeholder Consultations</b>	<p>Interviews were conducted with representatives of the following stakeholder organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Department of Local Government and Communities</li> <li>- Wheatbelt Development Commission</li> <li>- Pilbara Regional Council</li> <li>- Office of Multicultural Interests</li> <li>- Council of the Ageing</li> <li>- Seniors Ministerial Advisory Council</li> <li>- Western Australian Local Government Association</li> <li>- Local Government Professionals WA</li> <li>- Alzheimer’s Australia WA</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Two: Other Research Activities</b>	<p>Further interviews were conducted with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Karen Purdy, DTWD, former Manager of Research and Evaluation at DoC</li> <li>- Robyn Teede, Policy Officer, DLGC</li> <li>- Pearl Craig, Grants Manager, DLGC</li> <li>- Gemma Turner, Senior Grants Officer, DLGC</li> </ul> <p>Participant observation to expand contextual understanding at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bayswater Multicultural Community Café</li> <li>- LGP WA AF Network PD Day at Melville</li> <li>- AFIG meetings</li> <li>- Cockburn iPad users club</li> <li>- Belmont Multicultural Community Café</li> </ul>

## Timeline to an age-friendly Western Australia



## Summary of findings and recommendations

### 1: Ageing, a critical emerging priority: WHO age-friendly, an appropriate response

#### Findings:

- 1.1 Local governments in WA are keenly aware of the challenges of an ageing population and are increasingly seeking appropriate responses to support this growing demographic.
- 1.2 The WHO age-friendly approach is recognised as a best-practice model to serve the needs of seniors living in the community.
- 1.3 In addition to the 70 local governments funded under the grants program, many other local governments have engaged in age-friendly activities without DLGC support.
- 1.4 Engagement with the approach is not universal; resourcing is the most significant barrier to new local governments adopting the age-friendly approach.

#### Recommendation 1.1

Maintain the momentum on ageing as a critical issue. Governments need to research, consult on and monitor local trends in ageing demographics in order to strategically plan for future needs.

#### Recommendation 1.2

Continue to promote the WHO age-friendly as the best practice response to address strategic planning for age-friendly communities and endorse the benefits of joining WHO GNAFFC.

#### Recommendation 1.3

Maintain and renew support and resources for local governments to adopt the age-friendly approach.

#### Recommendation 1.4

Incentivise local governments that have had a positive experience of using the age-friendly approach to share this experience with similar local governments.

### 2: Engaging with age-friendly: how councils adapt a global approach to local conditions

#### Findings

- 2.1 The age-friendly approach is valued because it supports closer engagement with seniors.
- 2.2 The eight domains capture most concerns raised by seniors. There are however gaps. These include: digital literacy; lifelong learning; mental health; economic, cultural, social and gender diversity; local businesses and commerce.
- 2.3 WA local governments have grown more confident and innovative in adapting the age-friendly approach and the eight domains to suit local conditions.
- 2.4 One size does not fit all. Some local governments require simpler tools to assess the age-friendliness of their communities and to review their progress.

#### Recommendation 2.1

Review, revise and update the WA age-friendly toolkit, drawing on the expertise of local government officers. Create an online resource repository where local governments can share tools and survey instruments that they have developed and adapted.

#### Recommendation 2.2

Encourage research and innovation in addressing the gaps and challenges in age-friendly delivery, including digital literacy; lifelong learning; mental health; diversity; and commerce.

#### Recommendation 2.3

Develop a simpler, more prescriptive approach for local governments with fewer resources.

### 3: DLGC support for age-friendly:

#### A unique partnership between State and local government

##### Findings

- 3.1 DLGC's role in whole of government collaboration to support age-friendly is a defining feature of WA's success and has been recognised as a leading model nationally.
- 3.2 The grants program has been fundamental to establishing the age-friendly approach in WA. Before the grants program, few local governments had seniors planning documents. Without funding many local governments would not have trialled this new approach.
- 3.3 Local governments welcome DLGC supporting local adaptations to age-friendly. However, DLGC could do more to recognise and validate age-friendly work conducted outside of the grants program.
- 3.4 DLGC is a supportive age-friendly partner of local governments; however greater age-friendly advocacy with other State Government agencies is needed.

##### Recommendation 3.1

Cement the Government of Western Australia's reputation as an age-friendly leader through profile building exercises that celebrate WA success in age-friendly nationally and globally.

##### Recommendation 3.2

Engage closely with all local governments that have done age-friendly research and planning. Celebrate local governments' achievements at different stages in the process. Communicate objectives of age-friendly initiatives clearly using consistent language.

##### Recommendation 3.3

Engage with other state agencies through AFIG and other channels; guide local governments to identify how they can better advocate for their seniors with state agencies.

### 4: Networks and communication:

#### Collegial support and collective momentum as drivers of change

##### Findings

- 4.1 Much of the success in WA has been the result of dedicated individuals working together to promote age-friendly to local government peers. Melville is a recognised leader.
- 4.2 LGP WA Age-friendly Network is highly influential; many local governments first engaged with the age-friendly approach after attending an event organised by this group.
- 4.3 Approaches to other networks are required to introduce the benefits of the age-friendly approach to new local government officers, executives and elected representatives.
- 4.4 Local government officers in regional areas need different networking solutions to support their age-friendly work.

##### Recommendation 4.1

Continue to support networking and training opportunities for local government officers working in age-friendly, particularly through the LGP WA Age-friendly Network.

##### Recommendation 4.2

Promote the age-friendly approach through other networks, including WALGA events, LGP WA Community Development networks and events.

##### Recommendation 4.3

Develop a simple online platform for age-friendly networking. This could include a resource repository and forums for asking questions and sharing ideas.

##### Recommendation 4.4

Find targeted solutions to connect age-friendly practitioners in regional local governments.

## 5: Other agencies and age-friendly approaches: complementary programmes and regional variances

### Findings

- 5.1 There is some duplication of agenda between DLGC and Regional Development Commissions in advancing age-friendly planning and implementation. As a result, there is some confusion about different, complementary approaches; local governments sometimes fail to differentiate between sources of funding for age-friendly work.
- 5.2 Local governments appreciate support provided by SWDC and WDC; external funding is critical to implementation success in small regional local governments.
- 5.3 Different tools result in the prioritisation of different implementation projects; these reflect regional strategic priorities.

### Recommendation 5.1

Maintain close partnerships with regional agencies to ensure programs and approaches are complementary and not competing.

### Recommendation 5.2

Develop tailored approaches for different regions; accept and support regional priorities.

### Recommendation 5.3

Develop improved communication and acquittal processes to better measure how regional priorities and alternative methods are used in age-friendly planning and implementation.

## 6: Collaborations between local governments

### Findings

- 6.1 Collaborations can be highly effective in identifying shared concerns and opportunities for collaborative solutions.
- 6.2 Collaborations risk poor outcomes when communication is poor, resulting in delayed timeframes, challenging acquittals and wasted time and effort.
- 6.3 Small budgets make it hard to engage a qualified consultant willing to conduct thorough community consultation.

### Recommendation 6.1

Encourage collaboration only when local governments have demonstrated ability to work together. Provide training in collaboration through relevant networks.

### Recommendation 6.2

Facilitate dialogue between local governments that have potential to collaborate, but have stalled in negotiations.

### Recommendation 6.3

Support major intersectoral collaborations involving state and local government as well as non-government partners to address priority issues and identify innovative, replicable solutions.

## 7: Consultants: Key partners in developing Age-friendly Community Plans

### Findings

- 7.1 Consultants have been critical to age-friendly research in Western Australia. Local governments frequently do not have the resources or capacity to do this work in-house and rely on experienced professionals to deliver complex projects.
- 7.2 As consultants are critical to the process, they can significantly affect the grant activities in both positive and negative ways. Getting the right consultant is important.

### Recommendation 7.1

Provide clearer guidelines for engaging consultants to do age-friendly work.

### Recommendation 7.2

Develop dialogue with WALGA and other partners, as partner organisations may be able to refer local governments to quality consultants where DLGC cannot.

## 8: Diversity among seniors: the importance of representative consultation and inclusive communities

### Findings

- 8.1 Local governments are increasingly aware of cultural, gender, economic and other forms of diversity among seniors
- 8.2 Because culture and gender are cross-cutting determinants of the active ageing framework, they are not adequately reflected in the methodology and eight domains of the age-friendly approach.
- 8.3 Consultation and planning for diverse seniors is identified as a major gap by many local governments. There is an acute need for more training, consultation tools, resources and capacity building to ensure age-friendly communities are inclusive for all.
- 8.4 The research and advocacy work of Alzheimer's Australia WA provides an excellent model of how to integrate needs of special interest groups into the age-friendly approach. Similar resources and tools could be developed to address the needs of other special interest groups.
- 8.5 Other stakeholders that are not well included in age-friendly consultations include carers and local businesses.

### Recommendation 8.1

Develop targeted approaches for age-friendly consultation with special interest groups, including CALD, Indigenous and LGBTIQ seniors. Collaborate with state agencies, community organisations, representative bodies, and local governments to ensure culturally sensitive inclusion. Produce resources to support local government engagement with diverse seniors.

### Recommendation 8.2

Time-poor stakeholders, such as carers and business owners, require different consultative approaches – such as individual interviews.

### Recommendation 8.3

Support the ongoing integration of dementia-friendly principles into local government age-friendly research and planning. Promote the successes of this integrated approach, which is unique to Western Australia.

### Recommendation 8.4

Highlight senior diversity awareness as a key dimension for the success of age-friendly by making it a key outcome for new targeted grant funding initiatives.

## 9: Executive, Council and inter-departmental engagement with the age-friendly approach essential to embed age-friendly in strategic community planning

### Findings

- 9.1 The age-friendly approach works best when all local government departments understand its importance and support inter-departmental collaboration to deliver tangible improvements for seniors.
- 9.2 Executive and Council support for the age-friendly approach is critical to implementation success in local governments.
- 9.3 Integrated strategic community planning has had a positive effect on the ways in which local governments report their age-friendly research findings, as well as plan and resource their age-friendly implementation initiatives.
- 9.4 Age-friendly Community Plans are most effective when they are informing strategies for community planning and are collectively owned by all departments, and not siloed in Community Services.

### Recommendation 9.1

Promote age-friendly through different forums to ensure the approach is understood and supported by executives, councillors and other departmental leaders in local governments, not just community services. This might be achieved through events like WALGA and LGP WA conferences.

### Recommendation 9.2

Engage all local government departments as well as the whole executive team in the age-friendly consultation and planning process. Effective steering groups include planners and engineers as well as community development professionals.

### Recommendation 9.3

Promote age-friendly to the public as well as within the sector. Normalising age-friendly language will have a positive impact on local government engagement with the approach.

### Recommendation 9.4

Encourage better 'branding' of age-friendly implementation projects; recognition of success among community and council will drive more support for further implementation.

### Recommendation 9.5

Support local governments in developing capacity to identify synergies between various mandatory and non-mandatory informing plans and incorporate into ongoing strategic planning.

### Summary of key terms in Findings and Recommendations tables:

<b>WHO:</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>DLGC:</b>	Department of Local Government and Communities
<b>GNAFCC:</b>	Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities
<b>AFIG:</b>	Age-friendly Interagency Group
<b>LGP WA:</b>	Local Government Professionals Western Australia
<b>WALGA:</b>	Western Australian Local Government Association
<b>SWDC:</b>	South West Development Commission
<b>WDC:</b>	Wheatbelt Development Commission

## 10: Implementation and drivers of success in age-friendly initiatives

### Findings

**10.1** The grants program has emphasised planning, to some extent at the expense of implementation. Some local governments funded in Rounds 1 and 2 have continued with the age-friendly approach; some have not. It is too early to assess the long term sustainability of the age-friendly approach for local governments funded under Rounds 4 and 5.

**10.2** Factors that support or limit the sustainability of age-friendly approaches include: resourcing and staff turnover; funding opportunities and constraints; community involvement; and commitment from Council.

**10.3** Ongoing review of Age-friendly Community Plans is an important part of evaluating progress under the age-friendly approach. Some WA local governments have developed good mechanisms for regular review. Those that have not require support and guidance in addressing this work and tools and / or funding to make it achievable.

### Recommendation 10.1

Support local governments in moving beyond age-friendly planning; implementation and evaluation are the essential next steps in creating sustainable age-friendly communities. Develop simple tools and / or recommended core indicators that can help local governments to conduct reviews and measure progress against age-friendly plans.

### Recommendation 10.2

Ensure acquittal processes for future funding rounds include a commitment to report on implementation progress over time. Support local governments to share their ongoing and developing experience in age-friendly approaches with colleagues in other local governments.

### Recommendation 10.3

Help local governments to identify sources of funding and support for age-friendly implementation projects.

### Recommendation 10.4

Celebrate and promote success in age-friendly implementation, including local governments at different stages in the process. Small incremental wins add up to significant change and tangible improvements for older people living in their communities.

## Future directions

To supplement the findings and recommendations, here we briefly highlight four emerging issues that will be critical in the evolution of the age-friendly approach in coming years.

### - Measurable success and continual improvement

New research from WHO emphasises the importance of using core indicators to deliver baseline data and measure success in creating age-friendly environments. Creating age-friendly cities and communities is an ongoing process that requires continual evaluation and development into the future. Best practice in age-friendly will increasingly entail measurable indicators to demonstrate improvement.

- [Diverse seniors and tailored solutions](#)

Seniors' diversity issues are often overlooked in age friendly planning. Because culture and gender are cross-cutting determinants of the active ageing framework, they are not adequately reflected in the methodology and eight domains of the age-friendly approach. New adaptations of the age-friendly approach will need to explicitly address multiple diversity issues for seniors as a key dimension of success in creating age-friendly communities.

- [Ageism, public communications strategies and normalising age-friendly language](#)

Ageism has recently been identified as one of the most critical issue impacting on age friendly outcomes. Age-friendly is established global best-practice; WHO GNAFCC has over 500 member cities and communities from 37 countries covering over 155 million people. Yet the language of age-friendly remains restricted to interested practitioners and policy makers. The next step at the international, national, state and local level will be to normalise that language across government and community. This will drive public support for age-friendly initiatives, while tackling ageism and reducing residual stigma.

- [Digital citizenship among seniors and an age-friendly future](#)

The world is now in a digital age but digital capabilities among seniors and local digital infrastructure vary. Information about local social activities and services is increasingly provided online. Accessing the most current information demands that senior citizens are digitally literate. Low levels of internet access and digital literacy among elderly Australians are therefore major equity issues that need to be addressed urgently. We know very little about the digital literacy of older people in Australia and more research is needed in this area. According to the 2016 Census, in Greater Perth, 11.6 per cent of men and 13.7 per cent of women over 50 years old have no internet access; these figures rise to 35.1 per cent and 37 per cent for those aged 85 and older. Furthermore, the provision of culturally competent care through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is an increasingly important way of addressing social isolation for seniors with reduced mobility. By having more ways to stay in touch, older people improve both the quality and the frequency of communication with their support networks, increase their knowledge of and access to available services, and enhance their health and wellbeing as a result. Supporting digital citizenship among older people is an essential component in creating an age-friendly future.

## Conclusion

In the period from 2006-2016, there has been significant change in how local governments in Western Australia manage seniors portfolios and support seniors living in their communities. In many parts of the state, but particularly in the South West, the Wheatbelt and metropolitan Perth, there has been strong sector engagement with the age-friendly approach. In no other Australian state or territory have so many local government areas applied the age-friendly lens to their strategic community planning.

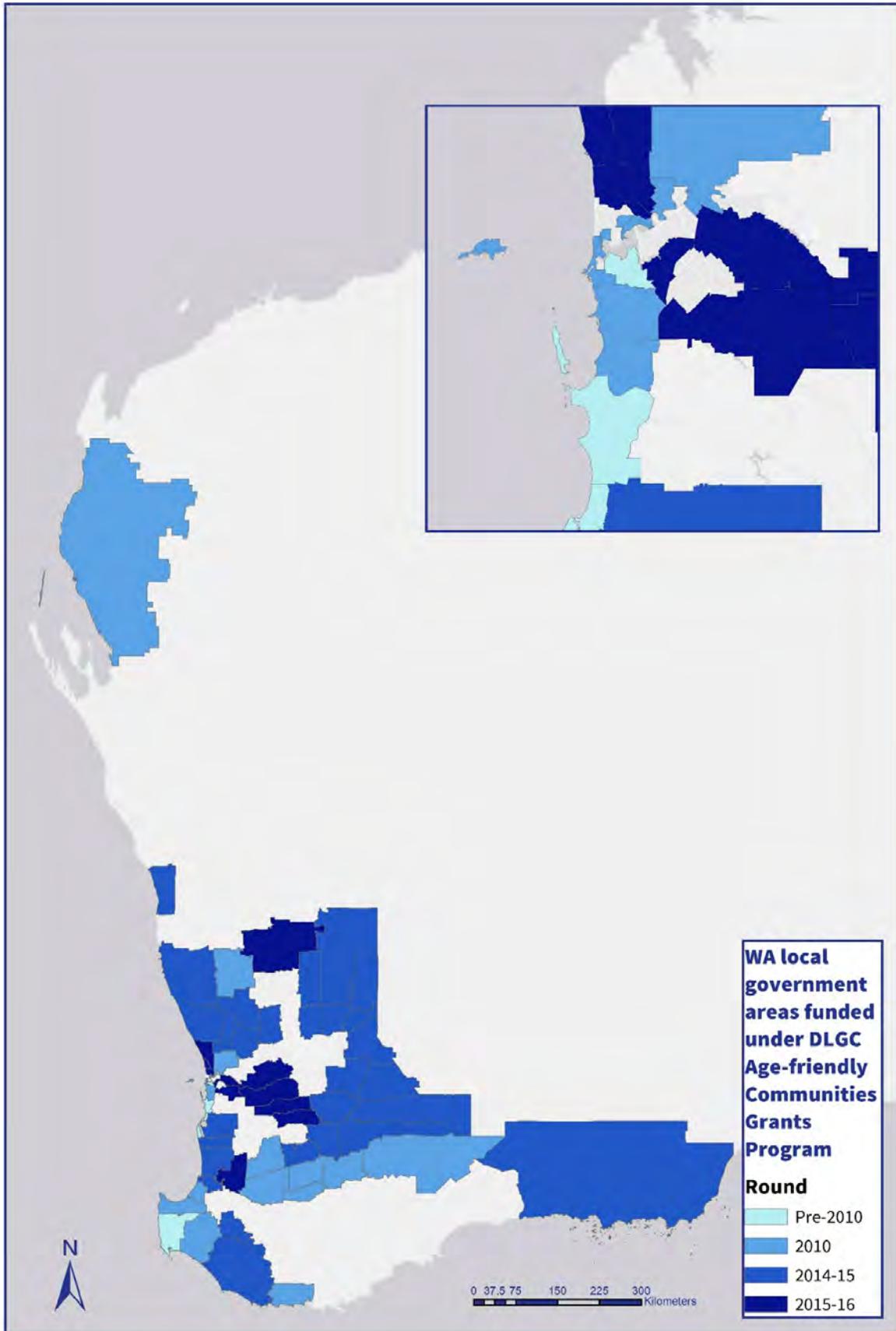
The DLGC Age-friendly Communities Local Government Grants Program has been a critical factor driving this change. Funding has been a financial incentive and necessary resource to commence age-friendly work and has enabled local government officers to secure executive and Council support for trialling this new approach to consulting with older people living in their communities.

Since the first four age-friendly local government pilots were funded by DoC in 2006-2009, the enthusiasm and commitment in the sector around this approach has gathered momentum. In addition to the 70 local governments that received funding under the grants program there are many more local governments that have developed an Age-friendly Community Plan, undertaken an age-friendly community audit, or incorporated the age-friendly methodology into their seniors community consultation.

This widespread success is due to DLGC age-friendly initiatives, including the grants program, intersecting with related activities and support provided by other State agencies as well as influential non-government actors.

The WHO age-friendly approach is regarded as global best practice. To work effectively however, the approach must be tailored in response to local conditions. Western Australian local governments funded under the grants program have developed creative solutions that identify and address gaps in the age-friendly approach to better serve the specific needs of diverse seniors living in their communities.

While the primary focus of the grants program has been age-friendly planning, this is only the first step in the WHO age-friendly cycle of continual improvement; ongoing implementation and evaluation of age-friendly initiatives are equally important. Future measurable success requires identifying the right resources and techniques for local governments to respond to changing needs as they create more age-friendly communities over time.





This report has been prepared on behalf of the Department of Local Government and Communities by the University of Western Australia. From 1 July 2017, communities functions from DLGC, including age-friendly communities, form part of the new Department of Communities.

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**Addendum:** All references to funded local governments were correct as of 1 June 2017. The City of Canning withdrew on June 19 2017; funds of \$7,000 received under the grants program will be returned.



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