

**Address to MAV Age-friendly Communities National Conference. Melbourne  
October 29 & 30th 2014 by W N Darby, member and Research Officer**



PACE: Peninsula Advisory Committee for Elders was established in 2006 by the well-known sociologist

Delys Sargeant who had been invited earlier by Council to be the foundation chair and to assist in setting up PACE.

Delys made a presentation to the MAV/COTA Positive Ageing Forum in June 2009, so as my time is limited, I will not go into details of that period again - those who are interested in the challenges may wish to consult that presentation, however I will allude to a few key issues.

I was a foundation member and I recall that it soon became apparent that we were breaking new ground regarding the role, and possible contributions of older people which was not properly appreciated by some Council staff or external bodies.

A turning point came when one of our Councillor representatives suggested that we did not need to concern ourselves with a particular matter, which he said " was being dealt with by officers and that we would be shown the proposal for comment in due course!" I clearly recall our rejoinder , namely that " we wanted to be involved in the recipe rather than be asked to put icing on the cake to cover any imperfections. " We also made it clear that this could often be done efficiently without any extra cost or delays.

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This message must have got back to the CEO as we often heard later that he regularly asked staff, who were reporting progress: “ Has PACE seen this draft and what did they have to say ? ” So once again leadership needs to start at the top !

Over the next few years we made various reviews and sometimes submissions to outside bodies, on such matters as road maintenance and safety in shopping centre car parks.

Another turning point was the appointment of a very experienced councillor to be Council's rep on our committee - He knew his way around the traps, offered us frank advice on the way to tackle issues, and took responsibility for following up issues and consultations with appropriate personnel. Subsequently we made it a practice to invite selected Council staff at various levels to brief PACE so that we developed a mutual understanding of issues, opportunities for improvement and any restraints that might exist.

We also recognised the benefits of inviting outside speakers on a wide range of issues which led to further work by PACE in areas such as :

- affordable housing
- adaptable housing design
- aged care, accommodation and its financial issues
- dementia and elder abuse
- demographics & future planning issues, including the availability of sufficient suitably sized plots within the Shire for aged accommodation
- problems being experienced by disabled residents which led to assisting council's Disability support group, and scooter policy

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- review of defective bus stops and lack of adequate footpaths exacerbated by population growth and tourism in a historically-rural shire
- We also recommended that Council appoint new staff positions such as a Volunteer coordinator, housing policy officer
- a MAV grant to engage a researcher for a life-long learning and library development project for those over 80 years of age.

In the eight years since establishment of PACE we have also developed a successful modus operandi which depends upon some key principles:

- members of PACE bring their wisdom, expertise and life experience but not their allegiances
- discussions are often informal, but conducted with respect and tolerance for other viewpoints
- conclusions and recommendations are developed by consensus
- voting is usually only a formality except for appointments to various positions, representation outside of PACE or for items such as expenses to attend conferences

Continuity of membership is important as is the management of PACE's agenda, and to this end we run an Executive Committee comprising:

- Chair
- deputy chair
- immediate past chair
- research officer

This group meets between regular committee meetings to review progress, prepare agendas and draft documents, especially whenever an urgent submission arises.

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It also initiated and maintains an Action Tracker on which we tabulate progress of our submissions, followup and responses received.this is issued periodically to all members and to staff representatives.

We act as an independent committee,are not run by Council or its officers who provide secretarial support, however new member nominations are submitted to Council by PACE for endorsement and Public liability insurance cover.

We believe that our advice often benefits the wider community not just elder citizens, which is encapsulated in recently completed MP Council's Positive Ageing Strategy - A Community for ALL ages !

[ holds up copy]