

**Woden Senior AGM Talk  
24 Sep 12  
Our Strategic Plan – 10 Years On  
Address by Alan Hodges AM**

**Development of Strategic Plan**

The February 2003 issue of the Meridian told of a \$40 000 grant received by the club from the ACT Government's Community Foundation.



The purpose of the grant was:

*To research and develop a comprehensive strategic 10-year plan for the social and physical development of the Woden Senior Citizens club as a self-sufficient, broadly-based, socially responsive community service.*

The strategic plan process was guided by a Project Committee of external advisors and club members, direction by Club President, Anne Murray, and Umar Burke who worked in Polly's job, and implementation by a consultant team of Marcus Mackay, Grahame Hellyer and me.

**Figure 1 External/Internal Project Committee**



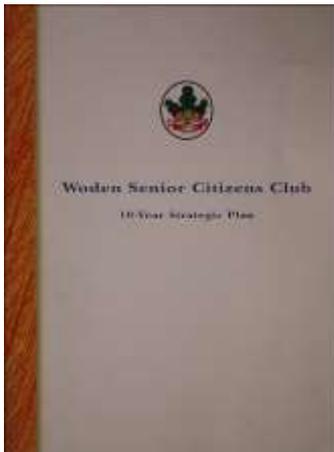
The then current Management Committee was also heavily involved in the progressive development of the plan.

**Figure 2 Club Management Committee 2003**



I would like to reflect on information discovered during the strategic planning process, to identify some aspects of the club today and to highlight the impact of the strategic plan.

**Figure 3 Strategic Plan publication**

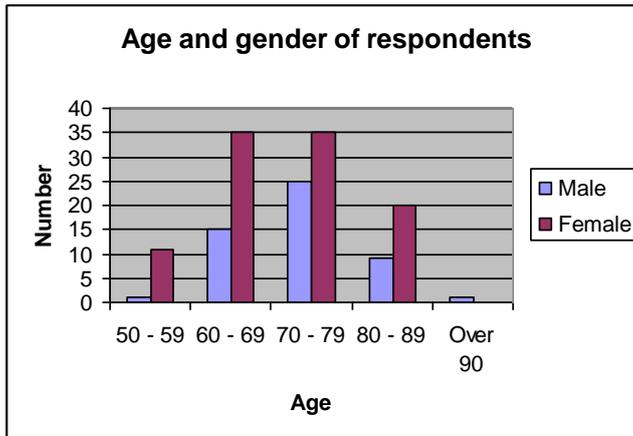


The project was quite extensive and involved research, a one-day workshop for 40 people,



The survey responses by members showed that:

- Most were aged 60-79



- Two-thirds of members were women.
- Most lived close to the club; 61% in Woden Valley/Weston Creek, 18% in Tuggeranong, and 9% in Central Canberra.
- Most members had been with the club for no more than 2 years and 22% of respondents were members for more than 9 years.

The most typical profile of the respondents was:

*A woman, aged between 60-69 years who lives in the Woden Valley. She is retired and lives on a government pension, having worked in either a secretarial/administrative capacity or in teaching/education. She joined the club in the last two years to participate in a particular activity, probably U3A but possibly also bridge, dancing or singing. She is satisfied with the activities run by the club, and with its management. She drives her own car to the club, which she finds easy to access, with good parking also central to other activities in Woden.*

Car parking featured a lot in survey responses. It was also the focus of many suggestions.

While participation in specific activities was frequently the initial attraction, companionship was by far the most frequently stated reason given as to why club membership was important for members once they have joined.

The most popular activities reported were dance groups, card and table games, art and crafts and carpet bowls and table tennis.

In the survey, members were asked their level of satisfaction with three aspects of the club – the activities, the building and the management of the club.

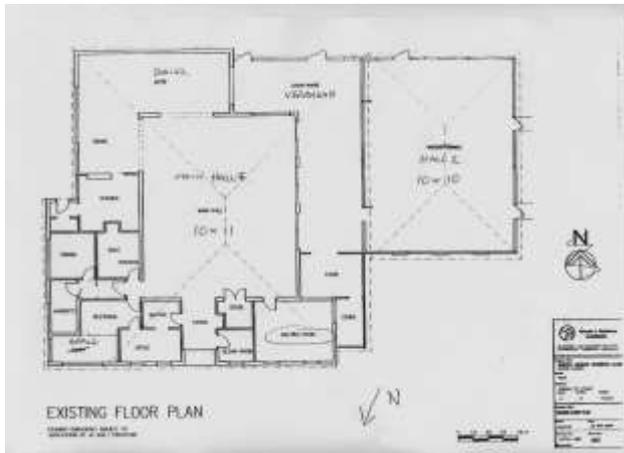
Satisfaction with club activities was high. The most mentioned additional services suggested were small meeting rooms and coffee facilities and light meals. Exercise

programs and a travel club were the most requested activities.

Members reported much less satisfaction with regard to the building.

Respondents indicated a number of areas in which the building could be improved.

**Figure 6 Club building plan 2003**



Most frequently mentioned were:

- A larger, upgraded kitchen with modern appliances.
- More/better toilets.
- Larger, refurbished premises with more areas for smaller groups to accommodate current needs and to cater for the likely future demand by an ageing population of baby boomers.

In relation to management, the feature most positively mentioned was the friendly, informal and welcoming atmosphere. The club was generally seen to be well organised and run, and there was high regard for the office team.

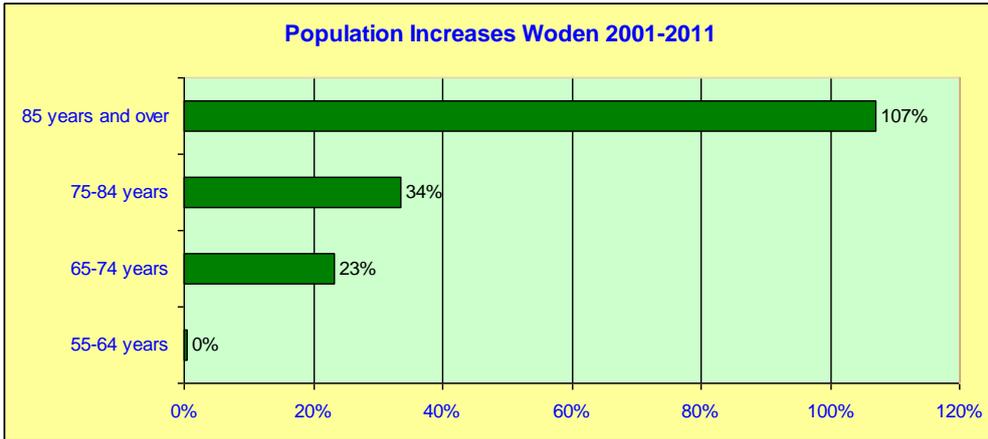
Some respondents wanted the variety of activities to be broadened to attract and cater for this potential membership boom.

The responses to the survey were very informative in identifying issues to be developed in the strategic plan.

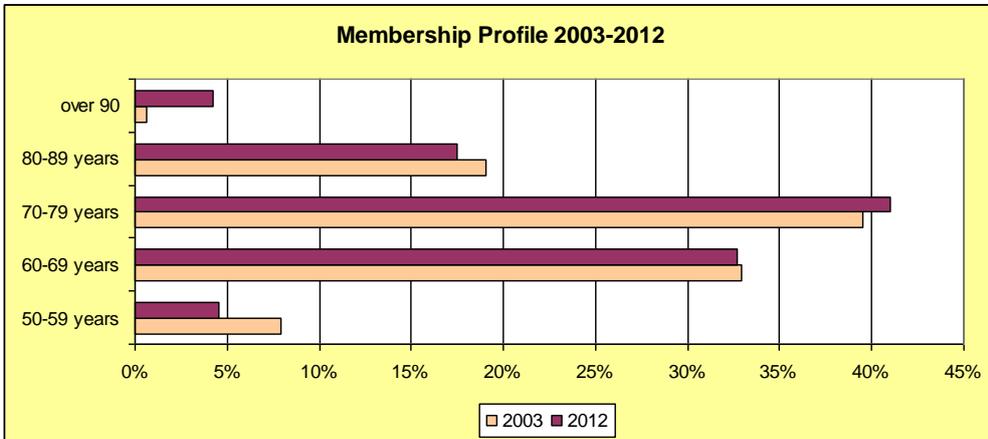
### **Current membership**

At the end of June this year member numbers were 625, only slightly more than 10 years ago, and well below the peak of 800 in 2008, even allowing for some difficulties with the current membership data base.

Based on demographic projections a decade ago, there was potential for the membership to double in line with the expected increase in the older population. In fact, the projections were reasonably accurate as shown by comparison of the population changes in Woden from results of the 2001 and 2011 Australian Census:



The age profile of club membership has not changed significantly, notwithstanding the growth in the aged population.

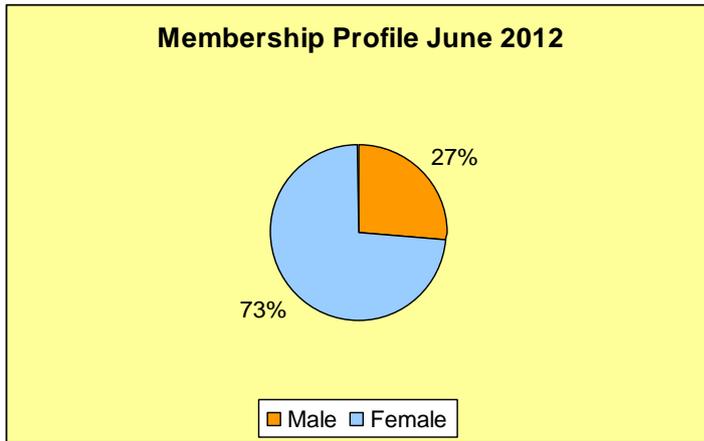


So, it is worth asking ourselves why we have not increased membership. Certainly, there have been many new members. For instance there have been 195 members joining in the last financial year, which is a sign of a healthy club. But 277 people did not renew membership. If this trend continues the club will have declining membership.



For people over 60 in Woden, 45 percent are men and 55 percent are women. Why, I

wonder is the male membership of the club so low with males on 27 percent?



**Figure 7 Wednesday 8.30am Ever Active (only male is taking the photo)**



**Figure 8 Wednesday 9am Art Class with men**

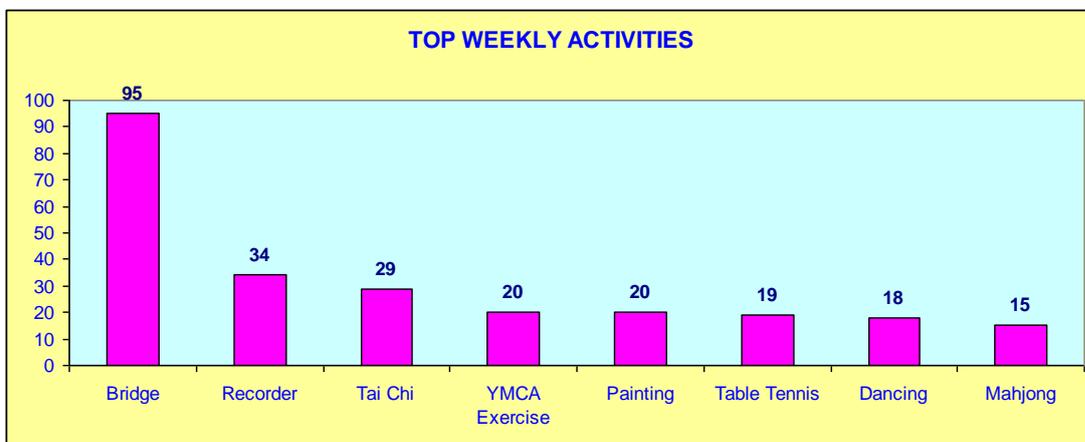


**Figure 9 Wednesday 9.30am Table Tennis with men and a celebrity**

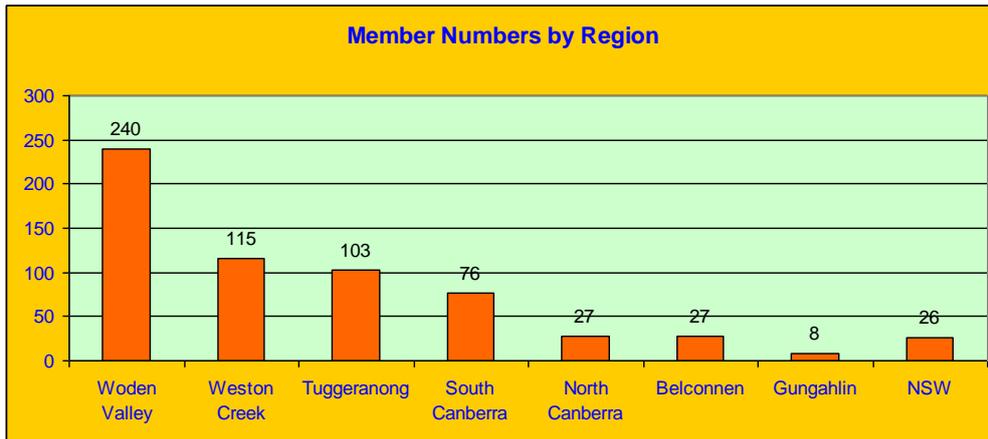


To gauge the level of participation in activities, I recently went through the attendance records for a typical week. This is what I found:

- There were 32 separate activities.
- There were 322 people participating during the week (some, of course, would have attended more than one activity). Nevertheless, this high number certainly demonstrates the importance of the club to so many people.
- Bridge was by far the most popular with 9 different sessions. And now there is to be a new eight-week course on Bridge Conventions!



The geographic spread of membership is much wider than Woden Valley. It is apparent that people are prepared to travel to attend activities, notwithstanding the availability of other seniors clubs in Tuggeranong, Turner and Belconnen



### Strategic Plan progress

Strategic planning can be challenging for an organisation as it requires actions to move beyond the comfortable here and now. And that involves effort, commitment and patience. Not everything can be undertaken in a short time frame. Hence, the strategic plan provided a 10-year approach.

I think it would be good to see what has been achieved. I will highlight just a few of the objectives identified in the strategic plan that have had a profound effect on the club in the last decade:

- *Explore opportunities to provide computer and Internet facilities for members and associated training.*

We now have a dedicated computer room with an active program of basic to advanced courses.

- *Review club name, including new logo and stationery.*

These have changed to a more modern style.

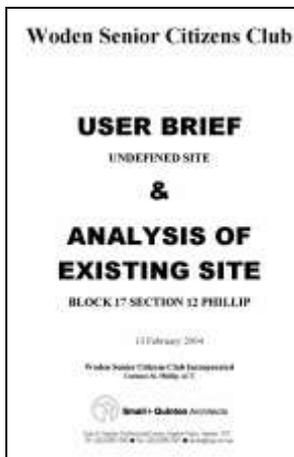


- *Develop club website.*

We now have a very informative site.



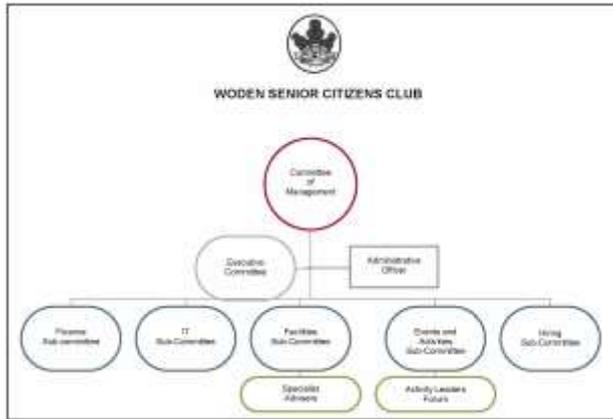
- *Develop user requirement to meet likely facilities needs to 2014.*  
A comprehensive User Brief was developed by an architect.  
This led to a detailed design and construction to improve the present facilities.



- *Draft relevant changes to the club's constitution for approval at AGM.*  
This has been completed.



- *Review current governance and management arrangements for the club.*  
Various sub-committees were established to provide a more professional approach to the running of the club. .



- *Provide furnishing and decor improvements for current facilities to improve usability and presentation and undertake progressively limited facility improvements in relation to entrance foyer, office space, kitchen, toilets, security, soundproofing and internal access.*

These have all been done and the amenity is now much-improved compared with the dysfunctional arrangements of 10 years ago. The entrance led directly to the main hall and there was no relaxing area as we have with the Anne Murray room.

- *Evaluate and upgrade financial management arrangements and upgrade office machines and computer hardware.*

All these needs have been met.

We have much to thank Anne Murray, in particular, for the foresight in proposing the development of a strategic plan and for her guidance in implementing it. Jon Stanhope launched the plan and, as a result of his strong commitment to development of the club, was instrumental in providing us with a \$50,000 grant towards the building redevelopment.



For those members who can remember the club a decade ago I believe that they will recognise that we have a vastly improved amenity and one that provides a wonderful service for senior Canberrans.

The club is obviously making life better for many people by providing a venue for socialisation, intellectual stimulation, physical activity and relaxation.

By 2020 one in five people will be 60 years or over. The challenge now confronting the club is to determine how it will feature in the lives of a greater number of people in the future.