



Connect Victoria Park Inc has developed the innovative Community Housing + Village Hub model to provide secure housing and social connection for older people. Our model is built on the foundations of the first senior citizens' centre in WA that opened in 1960 and our neighbouring community housing that was built in the '60s, '70s and '80s.

In more recent times we have established WA's first Village Hub for the benefit of older people in our housing and the broader neighbourhood. Our focus on inclusion, mutual support, and healthy ageing facilitates ageing in community and has resulted in improved quality of life for our tenants and other participants.

With increasing housing stress and homelessness amongst older people and continued risk of social isolation among older people we are seeking to develop a second Housing + Hub operation in the Inner South East Metropolitan area that will accommodate additional older people and deliver a Village Hub to another local community.

The Coalition Government has recognised the value of Village Hubs and has invested in new Village Hubs across Australia. We believe our Housing + Hub model builds on this and would assist to address the Government's priorities for our ageing population, including addressing the particular issues impacting on older women experiencing rental stress and homelessness. Affordable and social housing for older people is also critical with the greater emphasis on community-based aged care and the preference that older people themselves have to age in place in their community for as long as possible.

Connect's Community Housing + Village Hub model is replicable in communities across Australia and we would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the viability of this approach, our successes in improving social connection and wellbeing, and our successful management of social housing that is a valued part of our local community.

Current Situation

Connect Victoria Park Inc has been a provider of community housing for low income older people in Vic Park for 55 years and has developed and sustained this community service without ongoing government funding. In 2018 we started transforming our Senior Citizens' Centre into WA's first Village Hub and we now support our 73 tenants and more than 300 older Vic Park residents to age well in the community they love.

Our Village Hub provides access to free or affordable groups, classes and events; the capacity to request or offer help with small tasks within the 300+ strong membership; and 1:1 assistance through our Member Help Centre. This activity is funded through participant fees, fundraising, membership, a local government operating subsidy, grants, hall hire and rental income.

In 2020-21 we recorded:

- 13,520 attendances in classes, groups and events; 4,082 volunteer hours contributed by members; 117 occasions of 1:1 support through Member Help Centre and Ask A Member

- Participants report a positive impact on their physical and mental wellbeing (87%) and improved quality of life (86% reported good or excellent quality of life in 2021 compared to only 61% in 2018).

Features of our housing include:

- Tenancy Management that prioritises tenant wellbeing including social connection and assistance to access support services
- Free Membership of nearby Village Hub and access to classes, groups, events, Member Help Centre and Ask A Member
- Safety and security, proximity to services and feeling part of a community, are the main benefits reported by our tenants.

The need for the type of housing by Connect Victoria Park Inc is growing. This has been identified clearly in the 2019 Ageing on the Edge Report 'One Rent Increase From Disaster: Older renters living on the edge in Western Australia'. The report identified a 16% increase in homelessness in WA for those aged 65-74 between the 2011 and 2016 censuses, the biggest jump in homelessness in any group. Rental affordability measures also indicate a growing problem for older people on lower incomes.

The Proposal

Connect Victoria Park Inc is seeking capital from the Australian Government to develop a second Housing + Hub operation to assist to address the need for more affordable housing for older people and the need for greater social connection and support to age in community. We are keen to take our Housing + Hub model to another location within the Inner South-East metropolitan area and are flexible about location, with good proximity to major shopping areas and public transport preferred.

With investment from the Australian Government we would develop contemporary and highly liveable housing with access to carer/visitor rooms, some pet-friendly units, indoor and outdoor community spaces, and a residents only garden space. In addition to these housing amenities residents will also have access to support through the co-located Connect Community Housing office and the staff and volunteers of the new Village Hub. We believe a development of 45-75 dwellings and approximately 500 square metres of office and community space would enable a sustainable Housing + Hub operation to be established.

A Housing + Hub facility and the resultant community activity will add significant amenity to any local area, including by contributing attractive and contemporary buildings and community spaces designed for older people, increasing the permanent resident population who will use local shops and facilities, and increasing the passive surveillance with a resident population active in the area during the working week.

Once built the operating costs of the social housing units will be self-funding. The additional units and the second Hub will also bring economies of scale to Connect's operations and will contribute to the sustainability of our operations.

A COMMERCIAL-IN-CONFIDENCE supplementary document has also been submitted for use in consideration of this proposal. The supplementary document is NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

Further information on this proposal is available by contacting Luke Garswood, CEO, Connect Victoria Park Inc on 08 9361 2904 or [ceo@connectvictoriapark .org](mailto:ceo@connectvictoriapark.org)