



OFFICE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

TE TARI KAUMĀTUA

Administered by the Ministry of Social Development



2014 Report on the Positive Ageing Strategy

SUMMARY VERSION

Prepared by the Office for Senior Citizens

Introduction

“Old age is like everything else.
To make a success of it, you’ve got to
start young.”

Theodore Roosevelt

‘Positive ageing’ is something that everyone should experience.

The advantages are clear. Individuals benefit from ageing in good health and being independent, connected, respected and able to enjoy life. Society benefits from a healthy, happy and engaged older population that:

- contributes expertise and skills to the community and workforce, in both paid and unpaid roles
- has little demand for expensive health and social services
- provides positive role models for younger generations.

In today’s world it’s becoming more important than ever that we value the contributions of our older people, as skilled workers, volunteers, caregivers, mentors, leaders, taxpayers and consumers. The ageing of the ‘baby boom’ generation, together with a low birth rate and longer lifespans, means they’ll become a much greater proportion of our total population – and crucial to New Zealand’s social and economic development and growth.

The Positive Ageing Strategy articulates the Government’s commitment to enabling a society where people can age positively throughout their lives, and where older people are highly valued and recognised as an integral part of families and communities.

Comprising 10 key goals, it provides a common platform from which central and local government agencies and communities can develop strategies and initiatives for positive ageing – spanning the spectrum of health, financial security, independence, self-fulfilment, personal safety and living environments.

How well are we progressing towards the Strategy’s goals?

This report provides an update on progress towards the 10 goals, identifies opportunities for further work and suggests topics for further discussion.

Overall, New Zealand is progressing well. The Strategy’s achievements can be seen in many older people’s lives, their access to services and the support they both receive and provide in their communities.

Significant investments are being made in a number of areas, such as ensuring secure and adequate incomes, timely and accessible health services and affordable and accessible transport. However, more needs to be done in other areas, such as meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse population and responding to the access issues of older people living in rural communities.

Our challenge is to stay focused on our vision, to encourage debate and discussion, and to live up to our commitment to enable people to live rich, fulfilling lives in an environment of positive ageing for all.

“We want a society free of prejudice and discrimination against older people that captures the wisdom and experience that only age can bring, and uses this rich resource to build stronger communities in the future. To do this, we need to be able to identify the roles and responsibilities of individuals, communities, the voluntary and private sectors, as well as the Government, in the promotion of positive ageing.”

Prime Minister Rt Hon Jim Bolger, July 1997¹

1 Presentation to the Government of the final report of the Prime Ministerial Task Force on Positive Ageing, 1997.

Key points

Our ageing society is one of our greatest achievements

A growing number of older people² are in good health, have valuable skills and experience and are making a significant contribution to our economy and society.

Positive and active ageing is critical

If we're to tackle the challenge of population ageing and grow New Zealand's productivity, we must enable people to stay active as they grow older and to continue contributing to society.

Our ageing population is growing

New Zealand's ageing population will become more noticeable in the next 20 years as the last of the post-World War II 'baby boomers' group reach 65.

Population ageing will continue

The ageing population is projected to continue due mainly to longer lifespans and a flat birth rate. By 2025 there will be more people aged 65-plus than children aged 14 years and under, with this gap likely to widen past this date.

Older people are becoming more culturally diverse

Our older population, while largely New Zealand European, includes a greater diversity of ethnicities. The older Asian, Māori and Pacific populations are likely to have a range of culture-specific needs.

Older people have changing needs

The needs and wants of the baby boom generation are likely to be vastly different from those of the generation before them.

Many of New Zealand's regions are older than our cities

Many of New Zealand's smaller cities and districts are expected to age more quickly than urban regions in the next 20 years. Auckland will continue to have the largest actual population of older people.

Rural areas are ageing quickly

By 2033 every city and district will have more older people than children, with the exception of Auckland and Hamilton,³ bringing challenges for local economies that already face shortages of health staff, carers, and other issues.

Councils have differing priority levels for older people

While some councils have developed positive ageing strategies and services for older people, others are doing little or nothing.

There's an opportunity for more engagement at a central government level

A number of government agencies and District Health Boards (DHBs) have policies and programmes for older people. However, more government agencies could be actively looking at the likely implications of an ageing population for their policies and services.

Older people have high disability rates

Fifty-nine percent of people aged 65-plus are classed as disabled, compared with 21 percent of adults under 65 years.

Health is a dominant theme among services for older people

DHBs have developed a number of services and projects to improve older people's health and wellbeing, and are working on preventive measures and wellness programmes that enable people to age in their own homes in the community.

² For the purposes of this report, 'older people' refers to people aged 65-plus unless otherwise specified.

³ *Subnational population projections, by age and sex, 2013(base) -2043*, Statistics New Zealand: 2015

Older people are staying in the workforce longer

An increasing proportion of older New Zealanders are continuing to work past the age of 65. However, research shows that most workplaces don't have plans for an ageing workforce and a significant number of people have seen or experienced discrimination.

Employers are having to adjust to a new workplace dynamic

As the traditional 'working-age' population shrinks, businesses will need to retain and harness older people's skills in order to sustain their long-term growth and profitability.

Older people are a growing consumer group

As the older population grows so will their spending power. Businesses will need to better understand this group and the role they will play as consumers in the future. The rapid expansion of businesses signing up to the SuperGold card shows the beginning of this consumer market.

Better understanding between generations is critical

Promoting positive attitudes and intergenerational understanding is an important part of ensuring that people of all ages are connected and respected in their communities.

About the Positive Ageing Strategy

Released after extensive consultation in 2001, the Positive Ageing Strategy articulates the Government's commitment to positive ageing. It recognises:

- the value and importance of lifelong good health and wellbeing
- that older people have an abundance of skills, knowledge and experience to contribute to our country
- that we all have an interest in ensuring that older people can be active participants in society for as long as they possibly can.

Positive Ageing Strategy Vision

Our vision is for a society where:

- people can age positively
- older people are highly valued
- older people are recognised as an integral part of families and communities.

New Zealand will be a positive place in which to age when older people can say that they live in a society that values them, acknowledges their contributions and encourages their participation.

Ten aspirational goals

The Positive Ageing Strategy has 10 goals for central and local government agencies and communities. The goals enable us all to be 'on the same page' in understanding and responding to the issues of ageing.

The 10 goals are:

1. **Income** – secure and adequate income for older people.
2. **Health** – equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people.
3. **Housing** – affordable and appropriate housing options for older people.
4. **Transport** – affordable and accessible transport options for older people.
5. **Ageing in the Community** – older people feel safe and secure and can age in the community.
6. **Cultural Diversity** – a range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people.
7. **Rural Services** – older people living in rural communities are not disadvantaged when accessing services.
8. **Positive Attitudes** – people of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people.
9. **Employment Opportunities** – elimination of ageism and the promotion of flexible work options.
10. **Opportunities for Personal Growth and Participation** – increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation.

Progress on the Positive Ageing Strategy

The following pages summarise progress in each of the Positive Ageing Strategy's 10 goals. This summary includes comment from OSC on how each goal is being met, as well as questions to encourage debate and discussion.

A more in depth summary of progress towards each goal can be found in the full report on the OSC website: www.osc.govt.nz

What's next?

The purpose of this report is to encourage debate and discussion with local, central and non-government organisations, as well as the wider public, about how to plan for an ageing society.

Here are suggestions for how you can get involved:

- If you are with a local council, do you have a way for people to let their voice be heard in planning for an ageing population? If not have you considered holding a local forum to discuss the questions in the report with your community?
- If you are with a central government agency, have you considered how the ageing population will affect your policy decisions in the near, medium and long term future? If it will, have you considered ways for older people to have a voice in your policy decisions?
- If you are a member of the public, you can talk to your council to see what they are doing older people in your community.
- You can contact the Office for Senior Citizens at osc@msd.govt.nz if you would like to discuss the report.

Goal One: Income – secure and adequate income for older people

Along with health and housing, income is key to the wellbeing of New Zealand's older people.

Income: key achievements

- Providing NZS to all people aged 65-plus
- Maintaining older people's incomes and living standards
- Providing extra help for those most in need

So how are we doing?

Overall, older people in New Zealand are currently in a relatively comfortable situation. This is largely owing to the combination of NZS and high rates of home ownership, which has led to low levels of hardship.

However, people approaching retirement in the future (notably some groups aged 45–64) may be at risk of greater hardship because of:

- lowering home ownership rates
- high current hardship levels, which may continue into retirement

In addition, other income-related issues such as rising council rates and insurance costs are beginning to emerge. These could affect all older people who live on fixed incomes such as NZS.

What do you think?

- How do we encourage better financial capability and more retirement savings, especially among those aged 45–64?
- What options do people receiving KiwiSaver at 65 have to invest and manage their money wisely?
- How can we ensure that people aged 45–64 who are at risk of hardship are financially okay when full-time paid work is no longer feasible?

Goal Two: Health – equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people

Older people in good health generally enjoy a good quality of life and can contribute positively to their families and communities. However, as people age their health issues can become more acute and complex, and specialist care is often required.

Health: key achievements

- Providing access to residential care for those in need, particularly those with dementia
- Providing fall-prevention programmes for older people
- Supporting older people to live in their own homes for as long as they choose to and it is safe to do so
- Encouraging health professionals to train in hard-to-staff areas (which often involves working with older people)
- Focusing on health and wellbeing programmes for older people
- Providing better assessment tools for clinical assessments of older people in home care and aged-care residential facilities

So how are we doing?

Health is the dominant focus of policies and services designed for older people in New Zealand, and that's likely to remain the case.

It's encouraging to see:

- the increasing number of health and wellbeing programmes being provided
- the work underway to attract more people to train in hard-to-staff areas and to areas with skill shortages

However, the health system is forecast to come under pressure owing to:

- a rising shortage of health care professionals and carers, particularly for older people in smaller and rural areas, which could leave them isolated and vulnerable

- increases in the number of people with dementia. The forecast rise in the number of people with dementia will also place pressure on the system. The improved diagnosis of dementia and the drive to provide the right services need to continue, as does the development of innovative approaches, such as the planned dementia village in Rotorua.

What do you think?

- What are the resourcing implications of having appropriate services to enable older people to live at home for as long as they choose to?
- How can we address the likely shortage of health professionals and carers?
- How can we improve access to health services for older people in rural areas?

Goal Three: Housing – affordable and appropriate housing options for older people

Affordable and suitable housing is critical to people's health and wellbeing.

Housing: key achievements

- Helping low-income and at-risk older people with housing costs
- Improving the energy efficiency of current housing
- Progressing housing based on the principles of 'universal design'⁴

So how are we doing?

While older people generally have high levels of home ownership (often mortgage free – a key contributor to the current low hardship rate), the younger generations' home ownership patterns could pose challenges in the future.

Future housing policies will need to consider our ageing population and ensure that the housing is accessible and located near public transport, social infrastructure and key services where appropriate. More information also needs to be made available by relevant organisations on the growing number of housing options to help older people make informed choices.

It's pleasing to see the adoption of accessibility and universal design principles that will benefit people of all ages.

What do you think?

- How can more publicity be given to the growing number of housing options for older people to help them make well informed choices?
- How can we encourage industry and community groups to become involved in designing and supplying suitable housing that meets older people's needs, particularly in applying universal design principles and looking at suitable models for ethnic groups such as Māori?

Goal Four: Transport – affordable and accessible transport options for older people

Maintaining mobility for older people is crucial for their wellbeing, their ability to access services and their continued connection to their communities.

Transport: key achievements

- Providing free off-peak public transport and parking concessions
- Promoting the use of public transport
- Offering the Total Mobility Scheme
- Promoting transport options for older people who no longer have driver licences

So how are we doing?

Transport is vital to older people maintaining their social connections and accessing the services they need.

⁴ Universal design enables people to live safely and independently in their own homes at all ages and with all abilities. It includes features such as safe and easy access into and around the home and easy-to-use bathroom and kitchen layouts

It's encouraging to see the growing use of the SuperGold card, and driver safety programmes for older people. However, those living in small and rural areas with limited alternatives to driving may find it difficult to get health care and other services and stay connected with friends and family.

It's important that local councils consider, plan and implement viable transport and infrastructure options for the ageing population.

What do you think?

- What options are available in rural regions to enable older people without driver licences to get better access to transport?
- How do we make sure mobility scooters are safe for users and the wider public?

Goal Five: Ageing in the Community – older people feel safe and secure and can age in the community

For people to age positively they need to feel safe, secure and connected to others in their communities.

Ageing in the Community: key achievements

- Providing elder abuse and neglect prevention services
- Supporting carers through the New Zealand Carers' Strategy Action Plan
- Providing local solutions to address social isolation

So how are we doing?

It's important that older people are supported to stay, if they choose to, in their own homes so that they can maintain their community connections.

Unfortunately, ageing brings with it an increased risk of elder abuse and neglect and social isolation. While there are services available to address this, the increasing ethnic diversity among older people will challenge those services and highlight the need to:

- promote awareness of, and prevent, elder abuse and neglect in the wider community
- ensure that older people have access to services in their local areas.

While the increasing rate of socially isolation is concerning, some regional activities (such as *Napier Connects*) are helping encourage older people to become more engaged in their community. These provide good examples for other organisations to follow.

What do you think?

- What are the underlying causes of elder abuse and neglect, and how should we address them?
- How could government and community organisations, communities and individuals work better together to address the issue of social isolation?

Goal Six: Cultural Diversity – a range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people

Older people in New Zealand are increasingly diverse. The rising proportions of Māori, Pacific and Asian people are changing the cultural make-up of older people and introducing a range of approaches and attitudes towards ageing and the support of older people.

Cultural Diversity: key achievements

- Targeting services and information to ethnic groups
- Providing some culturally appropriate services, such as housing for Māori

So how are we doing?

New Zealand's increasing cultural diversity will become more apparent in our older population in future, particularly among Māori and Pacific peoples, who are forecast to live longer than they do today. It should be noted, however, that gaps between these groups and New Zealand European are forecast to continue.

Current services for older people are, in general, provided from a New Zealand European perspective. This will need to change as a more culturally diverse population will require more responsive services, in particular for older Asian ethnic groups, which will likely experience the largest proportional increases in the next 20 years.

What do you think?

- What can we do to ensure that older ethnic populations stay connected to the wider community?
- What are the implications of providing services for an older ethnic population? Are we giving them enough attention?

Goal Seven: Rural Services – older people living in rural communities are not disadvantaged when accessing services

New Zealand's population is ageing at a faster rate in smaller towns and rural regions than it is in larger urban cities.

A number of other Strategy goals, notably those focusing on health and transport, have highlighted access issues for older people in rural areas.

Rural Services: key achievements

- Investigating better access to specialist health appointments
- Providing targeted information to those in rural regions

So how are we doing?

Ageing in small towns and rural areas is often associated with higher morbidity (ill health) and mortality (death) rates, and lower life expectancy – and many older people in these areas are already seeing shortages in health, suitable housing and transport services.

As this report has already highlighted, the disparities that older people face in accessing services are likely to continue and could possibly widen, increasing the pressure on those in these communities to move to areas closer to services.

What do you think?

- How can we better service and co-ordinate specialist health visits for older people in hard-to-reach areas?

Goal Eight: Positive Attitudes – people of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people

An ageing society in which older people can continue to participate, and to which they can contribute their time, energy, experience and wisdom, can bring many benefits to communities and the country.

Positive Attitudes: key achievements

- Progressing *The Business of Ageing* project to highlight older people's contributions to the economy as workers, volunteers, taxpayers and consumers
- Investigating the 'Age-Friendly Cities' concept in some regions

So how are we doing?

Many perceive our ageing society as a burden, yet it's one of our greatest achievements. People are living significantly longer and healthier lives than they did 50–100 years ago and, as *The Business of Ageing* report highlighted, a growing number of older people are in good health, have valuable skills and experience and are willing to make a significant contribution to the economy and society. Businesses will need to find ways to tap into this group as it grows in the next 20 years.

What do you think?

- How can we help businesses and the wider public to better understand the positive contributions of older people and the growing value of older consumers?

Goal Nine: Employment Opportunities – elimination of ageism and the promotion of flexible work options

As New Zealand's demand for skilled labour rises, older people will become an increasingly important and valuable part of our workforce. today.

This ageing workforce will increasingly require employers to focus on retaining experienced and skilled employees (to ensure productivity) while mentoring younger ones.

Employment Opportunities: key achievements

- Providing research on older people's employment rates and what they mean for New Zealand

So how are we doing?

Just as New Zealand's population is ageing, so too is our workforce – and older workers in both the private and public sectors will have an increasing role as productive and valuable employees who contribute to our nation's prosperity.

Unfortunately however, there currently appears to be:

- a mismatch between this positive contribution and some negative – and unfounded – perceptions of older people in the workplace
- a high prevalence of age discrimination in the workplace

Both of these developments can be harmful for both the individuals concerned and businesses' productivity and prospects, and need to be addressed through proactive workforce planning.

What do you think?

- How can employers and employees better understand the consequences of an ageing workforce, including the benefits of older people's participation?
- Are government agencies planning enough for an ageing workforce? If not, what are the barriers?

Goal Ten: Opportunities for Personal Growth and Participation – increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation

Older people make a vital contribution to our economy and our communities – as leaders, mentors, taxpayers, consumers, skilled workers, volunteers and caregivers.

Opportunities for Personal Growth and Participation: key achievements

- Providing services and programmes to connect older and younger people and promote better understanding between age groups
- Councils undertaking positive ageing strategies in their regions
- Older people being given a voice in council and government policies

So how are we doing?

It's pleasing to see some councils engaging with older people through positive ageing strategies and targeted services. However, they need to ensure that any forums and groups are representative of all generations in the community, as these age groups don't live in isolation from each other.

Other councils have yet to focus specifically on older people, mainly because of other priorities. While this is understandable, many will have large local older populations in future that will need their attention – so where possible they should find ways now to include older people's perspectives in policy and service decisions.

What do you think?

- Are older people's needs and wants adequately integrated into community decision-making?
- How can we include younger people in discussions about services for older people, and promote a more cohesive community for all ages?

More information

Office for Senior Citizens

www.osc.govt.nz

Age-Friendly Cities

www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_network/en/

Carers' Strategy and Five Year Action Plan

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/policy-development/carers-strategy/index.html

Consumer Affairs – Get Online Savvy – A Guide for Seniors

www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz/pdf-library/publications/Get-Online-Savvy.pdf

0800 555 066

Commission for Financial Capability

www.cffc.org.nz

Ministry of Health – Health of Older People

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/life-stages/health-older-people

0800 555 066

Ministry of Social Development – Household Incomes in New Zealand

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/monitoring/household-incomes/

Ministry of Social Development – The Business of Ageing report

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/business-of-ageing/>

Ministry of Social Development – Older New Zealanders document

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/seniorcitizens/positive-ageing/connected/>

Ministry of Social Development – A Guide for Carers

www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/carers/

Ministry of Social Development – Senior Services

www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/seniorcitizens/

0800 552 002 (New Zealand Superannuation)

0800 650 656 (Veteran's Pension)

Ministry of Social Development - SuperGold Card

www.supergold.govt.nz

Rates Rebate Scheme

www.dia.govt.nz/ratesrebates

Statistics New Zealand

www.stats.govt.nz

Total Mobility Scheme

www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/total-mobilityscheme/

Universal Housing Design

www.branz.co.nz/universal_design

www.lifemark.co.nz/home.aspx

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand

www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz

0800 483 8372

Waikato University – Making Active Ageing a Reality

www.waikato.ac.nz/fass/research/publications/making-active-ageing-a-reality-maximising-participation-and-contribution-by-older-people-2014



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