



The New Zealand  
**POSITIVE**  
**AGEING**  
*Strategy*

*Progress*  
*report*  
2006







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**Acknowledgement**

This summary is based on an independent review of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy annual reports and action plans from 2001 to June 2005 completed by the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing (NZiRA) in October 2005.

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## FOREWORD

### NEW ZEALAND POSITIVE AGEING STRATEGY – PROGRESS REPORT

*The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy reflects the wishes of New Zealanders to create a society where people can age positively. This requires more than Government action – it requires commitment and action from all sectors of society.*

When Government launched the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy in 2001, we promoted the Strategy as a living document and we expected that it would need to change and develop over time if progress was to be made towards meeting our positive ageing goals.

This progress report meets the Government's decision to review the Positive Ageing Strategy approximately every three years.

I am pleased to report that an independent review by the New Zealand Institute for Ageing (NZiRA) in 2005 shows that significant progress has been made towards achieving the 10 goals identified in the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy.

Since the launch of the Strategy five years ago central government agencies have worked hard to develop policies and programmes, to improve the lives of older people in New Zealand. There has also been increasing interest from local government authorities in the Positive Ageing Strategy.

Since the first local government authority, New Plymouth District Council, signed up to the Strategy in 2003, a further 20 local councils have come on board. The commitment of local government to positive ageing, and to involve older people in their planning process has been fundamental to improving the wellbeing of older people throughout New Zealand.

Congratulations to all the agencies who have contributed to this very pleasing result.



**Ruth Dyson**  
Minister for Senior Citizens



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## PURPOSE

The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy was launched in 2001. It is the government's framework for improving opportunities for older people to participate in the community in ways that they choose. It sets the vision for positive ageing in New Zealand and identifies 10 positive ageing goals.

### The Goals of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy

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The goals are:

1. **Secure and adequate income for older people**
2. **Equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people**
3. **Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people**
4. **Affordable and accessible transport options for older people**
5. **Older people feel safe and secure and can age in place**
6. **A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people**
7. **Older people living in rural communities are not disadvantaged when accessing services**
8. **People of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and to older people**
9. **Elimination of ageism and the promotion of flexible work options**
10. **Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation.**



The 10 positive ageing goals were developed through nationwide consultation with older people. They reflect the priority issues that were identified to improve opportunities for older people to participate in the community in the way they choose.

Older people are important members of society. They have valuable skills, knowledge and experience that contribute to New Zealand as a whole. The positive ageing goals are designed to empower older people and provide a framework for developing policy that has implications for older people.

Since the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy was launched, central, regional and local government agencies have listed work items in annual action plans that aim to achieve the positive ageing goals. This report summarises the significant progress public sector agencies have made towards achieving the 10 positive ageing goals. It highlights the achievements and identifies emerging areas of need.

Of particular note is the increased participation of local authorities in the development of positive ageing policies and programmes for older people. This impacts positively on local service delivery and consultation by enriching policy and promoting the wellbeing of older people.

In 2004, the Office for Senior Citizens commissioned the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing (NZiRA) to conduct a comprehensive review of how public sector agencies have worked to fulfill the goals of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy. As a baseline comparison, NZiRA used the Status Report<sup>1</sup> on the situation of older people and positive ageing in New Zealand that was published by the Ministry of Social Development in 2001. This current progress report is primarily based on the research conducted by NZiRA.

The Office for Senior Citizens hopes that this report will be widely read and used by public sector agencies at central, regional and local levels to further develop policies and actions to improve the lives of older people and promote positive ageing in New Zealand.

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1 *Positive Ageing in New Zealand: Diversity, Participation and Change*, Ministry of Social Development, 2001

# The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Goals

## 1. INCOME

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### GOAL:

**Secure and adequate income for older people**

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#### Government action on retirement income

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The government has taken steps to increase the security of publicly funded and universal retirement income. The New Zealand Superannuation Act 2001 established the New Zealand Superannuation Fund to partially fund predicted increases in future superannuation payments. The New Zealand Superannuation Fund is expected to have a balance of \$19.4 billion by mid-2009.

The legislation also introduced annual adjustments to rates of New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) in line with any increase in the Consumer Price Index, and in consideration of the relationship of NZS rates to the net average wage.

Agreements have been made with other countries so that New Zealanders can receive all or part of their NZS entitlements overseas and foreign-born pensioners who meet residential requirements can receive a pension while resident in New Zealand.

#### Older people's living standards<sup>2</sup>

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Through its research programme on living standards, the Ministry of Social Development has identified factors that influence the material wellbeing of older people. The findings suggested that the current level of NZS was sufficient to protect the majority of older people from material hardship, although 5% of older individuals experienced marked material hardship and a further 5-10% had some financial difficulties. Factors contributing to these difficulties are low lifetime income, lack of savings and lack of home ownership. Māori and Pacific peoples are likely to face greater financial difficulties in older age.

#### Retirement savings

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Currently, the majority of older people and people close to retirement age are likely to have an adequate standard of living resulting from the benefits of government policies during the 1930s to 1970s which encouraged home ownership, and provided free education. Many younger people may face uncertainties when they reach retirement age due to the impact on savings behaviour and later retirement income of high debt levels, student loans, later child-bearing and lower levels of home ownership.

Being enrolled in a workplace superannuation scheme is associated with higher levels of personal net worth, but current participation in such schemes is low. On 1 July 2004, the State Services Commission launched a work-based retirement scheme for state sector employees, in which the employer matches the eligible employee's contributions up to 3% of the employee's salary. In 2004/2005, there was a 50% participation rate for the over 45 years age group.

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2 *Living Standards of Older New Zealanders*, Ministry of Social Development, 2001

The 2005 Budget announced the KiwiSaver work-based contributory savings scheme for all workers, which will come into operation in July 2007. The scheme is designed primarily to promote saving for retirement. Government will offer a financial contribution to each saver, subsidies on first home deposits and assistance to reduce administration fees.

Public education is needed to increase retirement saving to ensure an adequate income for older people in the future. In 2001, the Retirement Commission launched the *Sorted* website to promote and educate people on financial matters and the need to plan for retirement. The *Sorted 60 Plus* website, [www.sorted.org.nz/index\\_60plus.html](http://www.sorted.org.nz/index_60plus.html), was launched in 2004 to meet the financial planning and information needs of older people.

## Other government initiatives

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The 2005 Budget announced that from 1 July 2006, married superannuitants with a partner in residential care will be eligible for the higher, single rate of NZS, rather than half the married rate.

One of the consequences of the Civil Union Bill 2005 is that it removes the practice of treating same-sex couples as individuals in relation to government assistance. In terms of NZS entitlements, same-sex couples will experience a net financial loss because they will either move from a single to a married rate or have their partner's eligibility taken into account.

Since 2001/2002, the Ministry of Social Development has run and evaluated small pilot programmes through its service arm, Work and Income, to improve its services to older people. One of these was the provision of Super Centres for specialised case management and streamlining of services for older people. Initiatives such as these recognise the different service needs of older people.

The Ministry of Social Development is providing focused case management for older job seekers and is working with employers to promote positive attitudes to hiring older workers. There is further information about these initiatives under Goal 9 – Employment.

### EMERGING ISSUES

- Experiences in mid-life (the 40–60 years age group) are an important influence on wellbeing in later life. The financial situation of the large baby boom cohort, now in mid-life, requires monitoring and research, especially with respect to their labour-force participation levels, their intentions and choices regarding retirement, and their savings and asset accumulation patterns.
- The performance of the New Zealand Superannuation Fund also requires long-term monitoring. Other options in this area include raising the age of eligibility, introducing a work test, changes in indexing, and some light income and asset testing. The Retirement Commission will report in 2007, and subsequently at three-year intervals, on its reviews of retirement income policies.

## 2. HEALTH

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### GOAL:

**Equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people**

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### Life expectancy

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Life expectancy at age 65 continues to grow for both men and women, with a narrowing of the gender gap. The average age of death for men in 2000–2002 was 81.7 years and for women 85 years. Differences between Māori and non-Māori have not decreased over the last decade. The average age of death for Māori men in 2000–2002 was 77.7 years and for Māori women 80.1 years. The largest improvement in life expectancy was for non-Māori males.

### Wellness throughout the life cycle and for older people

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Health is the cornerstone of independence for older people and an important basis for positive ageing. The Ministry of Health has developed several strategies focusing on health status and health outcomes for the New Zealand population as a whole.


The Health of Older People Strategy's primary aim is to develop an integrated approach to health and disability support services, which are responsive to older people's varied and changing needs, using a continuum of care model. The Ministry of Health's work with District Health Boards (DHBs) towards the goals of the Health of Older People Strategy has led to the development of a number of resources for specialists and papers to assist health planners and providers. Several key achievements noted in the Annual Report 2004–2005 included guidelines for geriatric needs assessments, post-operative care of older amputees, and an audit workbook for older people with dementia.

A major development with positive implications for older people is the establishment of Primary Health Organisations (PHOs). These aim to improve the health status of the population and increase access to health services. Since July 2004, people 65 years and over have been provided with reduced charges via government funded subsidies for general practitioner (GP) consultations and prescriptions through PHOs.

### Continuum of care – integrated planning, funding and delivery of health services

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Implementing the integrated continuum of care approach to meet the health needs of older people is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and the DHBs. The Ministry of Health is assisting DHBs to change the way they deliver services to older people and to develop and test new models of delivery. The provision of age-related services was devolved from the Ministry of Health to DHBs from late 2003. Several have produced action plans for older people's health services, eg Canterbury and Otago DHBs. These include a range of objectives, including developing diverse and affordable forms of supportive living arrangements and more diverse and intensive home-based services, transferring resources from institutional and hospital-based services to strengthen community and home-based



services, and making local health centres the base for co-ordinated community services through the PHO model.

### Geriatric needs assessment

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A standardised guideline for the needs assessment of older people has been developed to assist with implementing the integrated continuum of care approach. The main recommendation was for the development of a national dataset and national assessment tool. Work on this is continuing through the Ministry of Health and contracted researchers.

### Preventive programmes

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Health services offer a range of preventive measures to improve health outcomes and quality of life for older people. An important aspect of these measures is screening. The breast cancer screening programme has been extended to include women between 45–69 years for regular two-yearly monitoring. The Accident Compensation Corporation's (ACC) falls prevention programmes have also been extended.

### Residential care services

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The funding of residential care has been a controversial issue for many years. People 65 years and over, and some 50–64 year olds, who require long-term residential care can apply for a subsidy to cover the cost of their care, providing their assets are below fixed levels. Asset levels for the residential care subsidy have been raised and will increase annually, so that asset testing is progressively removed. Income testing will remain.

ACC can fully fund residential care costs for elderly victims of violent crime if they meet eligibility criteria.

The Ministry of Health is working on improved standards for dementia patients in residential care.

#### **EMERGING ISSUES**

- An increasing number of older workers have elder care responsibilities and need flexibility to adjust their work hours and job roles in order to balance family and work responsibilities. Increasing numbers of very old people are living in the community, and support for family caregivers is an emerging issue of some significance.
- Interest in the health of older men is growing, possibly resulting from the persistent, although narrowing, differential between male and female life expectancy. Increased attention to specific health problems is required in this area.

## 3. HOUSING

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### GOAL:

### Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people

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#### Public sector housing for older people

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A considerable increase in demand for public rentals by older people is predicted if present patterns of housing tenancy continue. Currently, about 15% of people aged 65 years and over rent their accommodation and these people tend to fall into the lower income groups. Housing New Zealand is the largest public landlord. The public rental stock is not well suited to the needs of older people. Housing New Zealand intends to review the type of houses it acquires and update obsolete or rundown stock to reflect the changing tenant mix and ageing population. By June 2005, Housing New Zealand had completed 773 modernisation projects and 2,317 energy-efficiency retrofits in its housing units.

#### Income-related rents

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Housing New Zealand began to implement income-related rents in late 2000. Figures from 2004 estimate that this policy would benefit 29% of older tenants, which is 2% of the total 65 plus population.

#### Assistance with local authority rates

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Concern about rises in local authority rates led to a review of the Rates Rebate Scheme. From 1 July 2006, the maximum rebate available under the scheme and income thresholds for eligibility for a rebate increased. Most single superannuitants are likely to benefit from the improved rebate scheme, allowing them to stay in their own homes for longer. Some local authorities have introduced a scheme to defer rates payments against home equity recoverable on sale of property.

#### Legal protection for retirement village residents

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The Retirement Villages Act came into effect in 2004. This provides greater protection and security to village residents by regulating the industry, by providing a disputes resolution process and a code of practice.

## Housing initiatives for older people

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The provision of appropriate housing for older people, with special features and adaptations, is being encouraged by upgrading the public housing stock and partnership ventures between central and local government and the voluntary sector.

There is also a need to integrate housing with health and social services, particularly as research into older people ageing in place suggests that more people will choose to remain in their own homes until the end of their lives. Low-level support services, such as cleaning, gardening, assistance with laundry tasks and home maintenance, play an important role in maintaining independence.

## Assistance for home ownership

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There has been a decline in overall home ownership rates in the last decade. People who rent their accommodation are overrepresented in many measures of social and economic deprivation. Furthermore, they do not have the opportunities that homeowners have to release equity tied up in housing. Housing New Zealand has several programmes to help low-income families purchase homes, including the Mortgage Insurance scheme, which was extended in 2005 the Welcome Home Loan scheme, and Deposit Assistance, which is part of the KiwiSaver scheme.

### EMERGING ISSUES

- It is likely that the vast majority of older people in the future will be ageing in place. This means that where people need high levels of care and support, mainstream housing may not be suitable. A variety of housing responses are needed to meet the needs of an ageing population. Sheltered housing, with special design or location features for older people, can link housing and home-based care and support services.
- Low-income homeowners may still require assistance with maintenance, renovation and adaptation if they are to age positively and healthily. Limited assistance is available from non-governmental organisations, health authorities and ACC. Lack of assistance in these areas may lead to loss of independence for older people.
- Older homeowners are able to release funds tied up in housing to meet their financial needs. One method is through Home Equity Conversion (HEC) schemes. The Office for Senior Citizens is conducting public consultation on how to create a minimum set of standards for HEC schemes from late 2006 to early 2007.

## 4. TRANSPORT

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### GOAL:

### Affordable and accessible transport options for older people

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#### Transport and older people

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Mobility is a significant factor in enabling older people to remain active in their communities. Older people are currently heavily dependent on private transport and loss of access to a car can have a significant impact on independence and community participation.

#### Bus/train services

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Recent developments, such as low floors, ramps and the capacity for buses to kneel, have improved accessibility to bus and train services. Remaining barriers to older people's use of public transport include unsuitable facilities and safety concerns. Cost is not seen to be a barrier.

The Office for Senior Citizens' report *Coping Without a Car* and brochure *How will you get around when you stop driving?* suggest a number of ways older people can stay mobile.

#### Taxis and the Total Mobility scheme

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Taxis are flexible and can be ideal for less mobile older people although they are seen as expensive and their use is not widespread. The Total Mobility scheme provides discount taxi vouchers for people certified as disabled. A 2005 Ministry of Transport review found that the scheme made a positive difference to many people of limited mobility, including many older people. The scheme received a \$9.49m funding increase in 2005.

#### Licensing older drivers

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Two-thirds of people under 80 years hold driver's licences, so the majority of New Zealanders enter old age accustomed to private transport. The main reasons why older people cease to drive appear to be either losing or voluntarily relinquishing a licence.

#### Assistance for older road users

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Several recent initiatives, including information provision, workbooks and courses, aim to help older people on the road. Safe with Age courses are free sessions designed to assist older road users with information on road user safety and to help improve their confidence, especially as they approach the 80 Plus Driving Test. Evaluations of these courses show considerable success.





## Regulation of driving

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General health problems and disabilities in later life can affect an older person's ability to drive easily and safely, so some screening of older drivers is required. The current requirements include medical and eyesight tests at 75 years and practical driving tests on a two-yearly basis from 80 years.

Due to widespread concern, the Ministry of Transport has reconsidered the 80 Plus Driving Test policy. As a result, from 4 December 2006, older drivers will no longer be required to sit mandatory driving tests, but will need a medical certificate from their GP as to their fitness to drive. The GP can refer a patient for an on-road driving test if there are any concerns.

Older people are increasingly using electric scooters as an alternative mode of transport. The Transport Amendment Act 2005 clarified the definition of these vehicles so that older people of limited mobility may own and drive mobility scooters without needing to register as licensed drivers, provided that the power output of the vehicle is under 1,500 watts.

### EMERGING ISSUES

- Safety concerns often inhibit older people who are able, or prefer, to walk. Improving safety and comfort in walking conditions would increase accessibility for older people, as well as having health benefits.
- Transport services are poorly co-ordinated, with few systems for integrating the services offered by different providers. This limits the ability of older people to travel easily, not only across the country, but also across towns and cities.

## 5. AGEING IN PLACE

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### GOAL:

**Older people feel safe and secure and can age in place**

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### Services to support ageing in place

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In New Zealand, a high proportion of people choose to remain in their own homes until the end of their lives. This is termed ageing in place. Ageing in place is positively linked to increasing lifestyle choices, community involvement and activity. People's ability to do this successfully requires appropriate housing and home-based care services.

### Promotion of safety for older people

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Home safety is essential for older people to age in place. Two key areas involving safety of older people living in the community have received recent attention from public sector agencies. ACC has introduced programmes to promote fall prevention. The Fire Service has identified that older people have a high risk of experiencing fire incidents resulting in death. ACC and the Fire Service provide free smoke alarm installation and fire escape planning education to older people.

### Elder abuse and neglect

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*Te Rito: New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy* (2002) highlighted interpersonal violence as threatening the safety of older people. To counter this threat, a nationwide network of Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention service providers was resourced and developed by Child, Youth and Family (now transferred to the Ministry of Social Development). There are currently 24 Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention service providers throughout New Zealand. These services received a substantial increase in funding in the 2005 Budget.

### Legal protection for older people

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A significant number of elder abuse and neglect cases involve financial abuse and many of these relate to misuse of Enduring Powers of Attorney. There is an increased awareness that Enduring Powers of Attorney has the potential to be misused in its current form.

The Office for Senior Citizens is currently working to improve the safety of vulnerable older people through proposed changes to the Enduring Powers of Attorney provisions, regulation and monitoring.



## EMERGING ISSUES

- As the population ages, and the numbers of very old people living alone grow, issues related to adequate housing and provision of home-based care services for the very old will become more important and a co-ordinated approach will be needed. Increasing levels of workplace participation from informal carers suggest that support for older people ageing in place will become a work-life balance issue.

**Note:** Many of the issues raised under Goal 5 – Ageing in Place have links to other positive ageing goals, such as housing for older people, the provision of health and support services, income and transport, and are also discussed in relation to these goals.

## 6. CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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### GOAL:

**A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people**

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### Future ethnic and cultural diversity

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Greater ethnic diversity among older people is expected in the future. Currently, over 90% of older people describe themselves as of European descent or Pākehā. Between 2001 and 2021, the over 65 years Māori population is expected to grow by 185%, the Pacific population in this age group by 178% and the Asian population in this age group by 400%<sup>3</sup>.

### Addressing ethnic diversity

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To address this increased ethnic diversity, the Office of Ethnic Affairs developed the *Ethnic Perspective in Policy Framework* (2003). This is a resource guide designed to help policy makers consider how their work affects the diverse ethnic groups in New Zealand.

### Culturally appropriate services by and for Māori

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The *Māori Health Strategy* (2002) was released to address the health needs of all Māori and reduce inequalities in health status between Māori and non-Māori. The central principle of this strategy is the support of Māori whānau, recognising that whānau plays a central role in the health and wellbeing of Māori, both individually and collectively.

The strategy is to be implemented through the *Māori Health Action Plan* (2003). Māori-led initiatives for improving health and access to services are to be developed and supported. The Māori public health priorities include lowering tobacco consumption, reducing suicides, addressing physical activity and nutrition, and tackling obesity, improving access to immunisation, and reducing interpersonal violence.

Increasing the number of Māori health care workers is also part of the overall strategy. One initiative is the Ministry of Health's Hauora Māori Scholarships, which assist students to undertake or complete a course in health and disability studies (accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority), in order to build Māori workforce capacity and thereby improve the ability of Māori to provide services by and for Māori.

Te Puni Kōkiri reported in their *2004/2005 Annual Report* that older Māori have benefited from 528 capacity building projects for iwi, hapū and whānau.

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3 Cornwall, J and Dovey J (2004) Background paper prepared for the Ministry of Health, available at [www.moh.govt.nz/](http://www.moh.govt.nz/)

## Culturally appropriate services by and for Pacific peoples

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Currently, there are comparatively few older Pacific peoples, but numbers will increase in the future. The underlying principle of the *Pacific Health and Disability Action Plan* (2002) is the improvement of the health and wellbeing of people across the life cycle. As the Pacific population is comparatively young, one of the key actions, is to improve child and youth health. This is combined with the public health focus of promoting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing by reducing risks and increasing prevention and screening programmes.

Capacity building in Pacific communities will help to meet their future needs. The Pacific Capacity Building Strategy began in 2000. It aims to identify the needs of Pacific communities and assist them to achieve their identified goals and aspirations. Eight pilot programmes have focused on reducing social and economic disparities for Pacific peoples in the key priority areas of health, housing, employment and education.

## Consultation with older people in ethnic communities

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A kaumātua and an older Pacific person have been appointed to the Minister for Senior Citizens' Advisory Council for Senior Citizens to provide Māori and Pacific perspectives. The Office for Senior Citizens has appointed Māori, Asian, Indian and Pacific Volunteer Community Co-ordinators to work in their communities on issues of relevance to older people and to promote positive ageing.

### EMERGING ISSUE

- The broadening of sources of immigration into New Zealand and the acceptance of refugees for permanent residence is increasing the ethnic diversity of the population. In time, this will also bring greater diversity among the older population. Actions under the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy will therefore need to encompass the needs and wellbeing of a greater variety of cultural groups.

## 7. RURAL

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### GOAL:

**Older people living in rural communities are not disadvantaged when accessing services**

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### Improving service delivery to rural areas

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One in every 10 older New Zealanders lives in a rural area. Rural people often need to travel some distance to access the services they require. The delivery of public services and information about government programmes and policies to small centres and rural areas has been improved.

Heartland Service Centres, operated by the Ministry of Social Development since 2001, act as one-stop shops where government services can be delivered to rural communities. They have been developed and improved since their initial implementation, as have Work and Income's rural services.

Work and Income East Coast is working on a programme to make home visits by Work and Income staff available to older people in the Wairoa area. Similar programmes are in operation in Dargaville and the Taranaki region.

Work and Income service centres nationwide are increasing visits by their staff to smaller centres. For example, in Nelson, Work and Income staff now provide weekly services to Hokitika's Heartland office and fortnightly services to Takaka and Reefton.

### Rural housing initiatives

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The Housing Innovation Fund, run through Housing New Zealand, aims to encourage not-for-profit, non-government community organisations and iwi to become more involved with providing low rental accommodation, which can include projects aimed at older people in rural areas. In addition to this fund, Te Puni Kōkiri and Housing New Zealand run a joint housing assistance programme called Special Housing Action Zones, which is principally for Māori communities occupying their papakāinga (original home base) or living on Māori land with multiple ownership. Work and Income Northland has established a Rural Housing Co-ordinator to work with local health providers and identify the housing requirements of their rural clients.



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## Rural education programmes

The Rural Education Activities Programme is a community-based flexible resource providing formal and informal learning opportunities for specific rural communities, adopting a lifelong learning approach. The Tertiary Education Commission has produced guidelines for Rural Education Activities Programmes, for the period 2006 to 2008.

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## General opportunities for community development

Several of the general community development schemes, mentioned later in the section Goal 10 – Opportunities, have the potential to assist rural communities and their older residents. Rural communities are now receiving improved internet access.

### **EMERGING ISSUE**

- Rural people have specific issues relating to access to primary health services, such as physiotherapy and dental care. More flexible options for home-based care are needed when older people from more remote areas are discharged from secondary care services.

## 8. ATTITUDES

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### GOAL:

**People of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people**

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### Promoting intergenerational awareness

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Intergenerational activities have the potential to promote positive attitudes towards ageing and older people among all age groups. The Office for Senior Citizens promotes Great and Grands month in October with activities in New Zealand schools, highlighting the role of grandparents and the contributions of older people to families and communities.

Intergenerational awareness is also fostered by national recognition of the contributions New Zealanders made in the two world wars. Central to this has been the establishment of the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior at the National War Memorial in Wellington in November 2004. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage launched an ANZAC website in April 2005, [www.anzac.govt.nz](http://www.anzac.govt.nz). Another achievement was the 2002 publication *Inside Stories*, a collection of interviews with New Zealand prisoners of war. In 2004, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage launched *From Memory*, an oral history project recording histories from New Zealand veterans of World War II and subsequent conflicts. The *From Memory* website, [www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/from-memory/](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/from-memory/) provides researchers with information about interviewing veterans.

### Fostering collaborative relationships

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Positive attitudes to ageing and older people can be promoted by fostering co-operative relationships between government, business, non-government organisations and the community. The Office for Senior Citizens developed the network of Volunteer Community Co-ordinators to carry out projects in New Zealand. The Volunteer Community Co-ordinators work through their local networks to distribute information and to enable their communities to participate quickly and effectively in projects that contribute to policy development.

Local authorities have set up forums to promote collaborative relationships with interest groups in their communities. The New Plymouth District Council developed a Positive Ageing Policy for the district, and in 2005 the New Plymouth Positive Ageing Trust (the Trust) was launched. The Trust works with community organisations and local regional and central government agencies on initiatives such as public information and discussion forums.

The inclusion of local government in the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Action Plans and Annual Reports process is a valuable step towards promoting positive attitudes and enhancing the wellbeing of older people through local planning, community involvement and service provision. Seventeen local authorities have identified actions to address issues for older people in their areas. For example, the Hamilton City Council organised a triathlon for people over 60 years in March 2005.





## Intergenerational carers

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The amended Care of Children Act 2004 recognises intergenerational family care. The Act was amended because the previous legislation did not recognise the cultural diversity of family types, including the role of grandparents, who were mostly excluded from the process. The issue of kinship carers, particularly grandparents raising grandchildren, has become an increasingly important aspect of intergenerational relationships. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust is campaigning for recognition of this issue and for greater support for grandparents in full-time caregiving situations.

### EMERGING ISSUES

- The baby boom generation will bring its own acquired attitudes, expectations and aspirations to later life. These are different from the experiences of earlier cohorts. More needs to be known about the attitudes of the baby boom generation and those of other age groups so that these can be taken into account in policy development.
- The inclusion of local government in the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy action plan and annual report process is a valuable step towards promoting positive attitudes and enhancing the wellbeing of older people through local planning, community involvement and service provision. Seventeen local authorities have identified actions to address issues for older people in their areas. Some of these have endorsed positive ageing strategies already in place, eg New Plymouth District Council. Other councils are developing draft strategies during 2005.
- The research programme Ensuring Wellbeing in an Ageing Society funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, includes a strong intergenerational focus in its design and has the potential to provide valuable data on flows of care, support and assistance between older and younger people.

## 9. EMPLOYMENT

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### GOAL:

### Elimination of ageism and the promotion of flexible work options

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#### The ageing workforce

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Almost half of the New Zealand workforce is aged over 40 years. The ageing of the workforce will continue as smaller cohorts of younger workers follow the baby boom generation. Labour and skills shortages are already emerging. Whether the workforce can continue to meet the demand for labour depends not just on numbers in the working-age group (people aged 18–65 years), but also on rates of workforce participation, particularly among older people. There is still evidence that older workers are discriminated against, may miss out on training and re-training opportunities, and have often been the target for job loss during times of economic downturn.

Rates of workforce participation among older people are increasing. Various factors influence whether older people participate in paid work. The abolition of compulsory retirement under the Human Rights Act 1993 and the raising of the age of eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation from 60 to 65 years in the 1990s were important policy moves to encourage older people to remain in the paid workforce. Other factors include labour market conditions, the extent of discrimination, flexible workplace practices, personal, financial and social circumstances, and caring responsibilities.

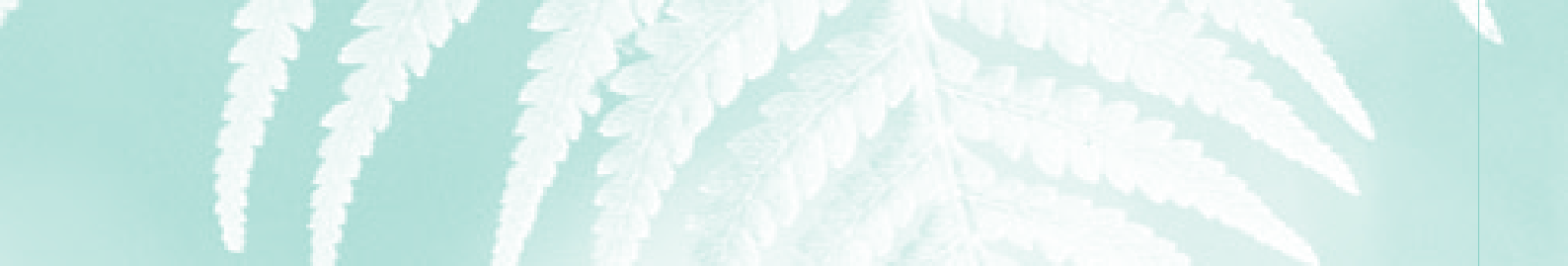
#### Initiatives for older workers in the public and other sectors

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The State Services Commission (SSC) produced a discussion document for managers in 2004 that outlined the implications of an ageing workforce. Work-life balance and flexible work practices were identified as the most important factors in managing this group of workers. SSC provided advice in 2005 for state service employers on encouraging a positive work-life balance for their employees. This advice identified that older workers are more likely to have elder care responsibilities and that they may want to reduce their hours of employment as a form of transition to retirement. The Department of Internal Affairs is highlighted by SSC as an example of good practice in the employment of older people.

Several government agencies have initiated human resources policies that recognise the situation and needs of older workers, including mentoring, flexible working conditions, recognition of elder care responsibilities and retirement seminars. For example, Archives New Zealand's 2005 Work, Life and Family/Whānau policy gives guidelines for phased retirement options and flexible work hours for people with elder care responsibilities.

The Future of Work website, [www.dol.govt.nz/futureofwork/](http://www.dol.govt.nz/futureofwork/), administered by the Department of Labour, was launched in 2002, together with the Future of Work Research Fund. This programme aims to increase understanding of future trends in work and their implications for the workplace, the workforce and employment opportunities.



The 2002 project *Learning Information Technologies in the Workplace: Māori and Older Workers in the Pulp and Paper Industry* was undertaken by Workbase, (the National Centre for Workplace Literacy and Language). This was a case study of the nature of workplace learning and the use of new workplace technology by older Māori employees in the pulp and paper manufacturing sector.

### Case management for older job seekers

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Work and Income's Jobs Jolt programme has an initiative to encourage older job seekers, where they are actively case managed to overcome some of the barriers they face in securing employment. Work and Income also works with employers to promote positive attitudes to hiring older workers, and to promote the benefits of older workers, particularly in light of an increasing labour and skills shortage.

#### **EMERGING ISSUES**

- Despite emerging labour shortages, there is still evidence of ageism in the labour-force, especially in hiring. Working with employers to challenge myths about older workers and to combat negative stereotypes would help to ensure that the employment potential of older people is recognised.
- There is an increasing need to ensure that older workers receive appropriate ongoing training and re-training in a rapidly changing work environment, especially given the pace of technological advances.

## 10. OPPORTUNITIES

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### GOAL:

#### Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation

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Many of the factors covered in earlier chapters influence the ability of older people to participate in community and educational opportunities, such as income, health and disability, transport and attitudes. While among the current older population formal educational achievement is low, this is likely to change as cohorts who have experienced better educational opportunities move into later life.

#### Older people and education

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Enrolments in tertiary education have steadily increased in recent years. There has been a rapid increase in the average age of students in tertiary education. Older people are, however, very much underrepresented in education and their needs receive little attention from educational institutions and in education policy.

A 2003 Victoria University study showed the benefits of university-level study for older people and its potential to enhance quality of life, identity and personal development. The research links mid-life education with workforce change and ageing, and makes a case for policies that encourage university-level education in mid-life. It can help people to remain in the workforce, reducing premature retirement and welfare dependency, and will also help to improve and update skill levels in the ageing workforce.

Community education, sometimes linked to polytechnics, universities and wānanga, is a more common source of educational involvement for older people, particularly women.

#### Adult education

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Adult and Community Education (ACE) is a programme designed to promote and facilitate lifelong learning. Increased funding for ACE was announced in the 2002 Budget and the Tertiary Education Commission set up the ACE Reference Group in 2003 to advise on the most effective and efficient means to improve ACE.

Some local initiatives have helped to extend learning opportunities for older people. For example, Christchurch City Libraries have developed a Lifelong Learning Strategy (2003) and a manager was appointed to implement this in August 2004. Delivery of computer training, internet access and mail services to older people at sites throughout the community will be investigated as part of this strategy.

#### Using the experiences and skills of older people

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Society benefits significantly from the skills and experiences of older people through their work as volunteers in a wide range of areas. It has been estimated that 15% of all unpaid community work is done by older people. An example of a valuable volunteer programme



that uses the skills of older people is SAGES (Older People as Mentors). This programme, established in July 2004 by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), matches older people and clients for one-on-one home and life skills mentoring. Volunteers are matched with MSD clients on the basis of skills, attitudes, cultural/ethnic identity, values, interests, personality and life experience.

### Supporting volunteer organisations

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The Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) was established in 1986 to provide essential support to not-for-profit, voluntary and community organisations. Isolated rural people and older people are two priority community sectors for COGS funding. Between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2005, grants were distributed to 214 community organisations, including rural groups, that identified older people as the main group to benefit.

The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector was launched in September 2003 and is part of MSD. The office works with government agencies that are developing policy that impacts upon the community and voluntary sector. It also provides advice to government departments on how to develop relationships with the community and voluntary sector to support the development of policy.

### Other opportunities

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The annual ACC New Zealand Thinksafe Masters Games provide an opportunity for older people to be active in a social and competitive sports environment. The most recent Games, held in Wanganui in February 2005, included 880 participants 65 years and over.

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand provides funding for veterans to attend overseas commemorative ceremonies for battles and to enable veteran groups to hold reunions. For example, in April 2005, an official party of veterans received funding to attend the 90th anniversary remembrance services at Gallipoli.

#### **EMERGING ISSUES**

- In the future, the older age group will have higher levels of educational achievement and may demand opportunities for learning in later life. The reasons for the present low involvement of older people in formal education and the barriers that exist need to be explored. It will be in the interest of educational institutions to meet the needs of older people as the supply of younger students decreases.
- The trend for an increasing older workforce will have an impact on the availability of older people for voluntary work. There is a question as to how essential voluntary and unpaid caring work will be done in the future. At the same time, increased longevity, better health and a growing number of older people means that their potential to contribute in their communities will be prolonged.

## CONCLUSION

The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy has had considerable success promoting the interests of older people. The Office for Senior Citizens has produced this progress report to highlight the significant progress that different agencies have made to meet the Strategy's 10 goals. Central, regional and local government agencies have developed many positive initiatives and programmes that are enabling older people to participate in their communities.

We hope that highlighting these initiatives and programmes will educate and inspire policy makers to make a difference for older people. We also hope that highlighting emerging issues will allow agencies to front-foot issues and continually improve policy so that older people can fully participate and contribute to their communities and New Zealand as a whole.





OFFICE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

TE TARI KAUMĀTUA

*Administered by the Ministry of Social Development*