

Positive Ageing Strategy

2005 - 2015

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Table of contents

Foreword.....	3
General Acknowledgement	4
Introduction	5
Definitions	6
‘Older people’	6
‘Baby boomer’	6
‘Ageism’ and ‘age discrimination’	6
Context.....	7
International	7
National	7
A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people	8
Local Government.....	8
Mission.....	9
Overview of the background of Council’s Positive Ageing Strategy.....	10
Brief Council profile.....	11
Demographic overview.....	11
Older People in Whangarei – a Profile.....	11
Future population trends	12
Emerging themes and issues.....	12
Positive Ageing Strategy.....	14
Community Outcomes – Alignment to New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principles	15
Positive Ageing Strategy.....	16
Objectives	16
Introduction	17
Objective 1	19
Objective 2	21
Objective 3	23
Objective 4	27
Objective 5	31
Objective 6	34
Objective 7	36
Objective 8	39
Objective 9	43
Objective 10	45
Final Comment	48
Bibliography	49
Appendix 1 Process.....	52
Appendix 2 Reviewing the Strategy	53
Appendix 3 Positive Ageing Questionnaire	54
Positive Ageing Strategy Feedback Form	55
Appendix 4 – Consultation feedback from mid-life group.....	57

Foreword

I am pleased to present this important document, which sets the scene for Council's response to the needs of older people over the next 10 years.

This Positive Ageing Strategy outlines the projects, large and small that Council undertakes to deliver to the District's older people so as to support their wellbeing and help improve their quality of life.

Ageing is a time of life which, if we are fortunate, we will all reach. To ensure the experience is positive we need to ascertain the impact on the District of an increasingly older population, identify older people's current and future needs and position Council to work proactively towards meeting these needs.

There is always a challenge in seeking to provide the best services for ratepayers while trying to keep costs as low as possible. This challenge will increase for all territorial authorities as the population ages and the range of services and programmes required to meet their needs grows in diversity, complexity and cost.

This Positive Ageing Strategy is the culmination of the input of many, in recognition of the contribution of many members of the community in providing friendship, services and support to older people in a manner which values their age, acknowledges their contribution and endorses their participation in our community.

People, young and old, have contributed to this strategy by providing feedback. This has ensured issues are identified and that themes and ideas for meeting older people's needs are considered. The document reflects a realistic and robust representation of what the community feels is important in caring for older people, and how it wants Council to respond.

Whangarei is an exciting place in which to work and live, particularly in this time of growth. I am honoured to lead Council at such a time and to represent Whangarei and all its citizens. I look forward to implementing the work outlined in this strategy for the benefit of all older people living in the Whangarei District.



Pamela Peters
Mayor
Whangarei District Council

October 2005

General Acknowledgement

Whangarei District Council Community Development Team and Venture Consulting who have produced this Strategy would like to acknowledge the help of all those who assisted directly with comments and advice, or indirectly (as referral points) with its development.

The advice and input from older people in the Whangarei community and resource people who work with older people, provided both on an individual basis and through small group discussions, is warmly appreciated.

Ideas and comments from Councillors and Council staff have also been of great assistance.

We would particularly like to thank the members of the Reference Group for their information, guidance and support. Reference Group members include:

- Beryl Wilkinson (Age Concern Whangarei)
- Chris Farrelly (Manaia Health PHO)
- Lyn Rostern (Northland District Health Board) and
- Agnes Hermans (Community Development Manager Whangarei District Council).

We would also like to acknowledge the Office of Senior Citizens within the Ministry of Social Development for its help and guidance in developing this strategy.

Introduction

In an environment where population ageing is projected to increase rapidly over the next ten years, Government departments and territorial local authorities are preparing plans and strategies designed to improve the quality of life of older people.

Whangarei District Council (Council) is one of a number of councils responding to the lead provided by the Office of Senior Citizens, which led the development of New Zealand's Positive Ageing Strategy and monitors actions and achievements related to the Strategy's goals.

Other councils – for example those of New Plymouth, Hamilton, Rotorua, Dunedin, Tasman, Christchurch and Wellington – have developed Positive Ageing strategies that are linked to both the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy and to their respective Long Term Council Community Plans.

Council joined this group of councils in 2003 when, as part of its Long Term Council Community Planning process, it identified an 'Older Persons Strategy' (now called the 'Positive Ageing Strategy') as a key project requiring action.

Council has now been invited to partner with the Office of Senior Citizens in taking steps to implement the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy at a local level, and to be listed in each annual action plan produced by the Office of the Senior Citizens

Council's intention is to integrate this Strategy into Council's activities reflected in the Long Term Council Community Plan and through this, into its annual planning process.

This means that the Strategy is future focused. It includes goals and action plans to guide Council's decision-making and operations in improving the quality of life for older people over the next ten years. It will also incorporate regular reviews and evaluation to ensure that the Strategy is able to adapt to needs as they emerge and change over this time.

The Strategy is 'whole of community' focused, recognising the need to take account of the priorities of today's older people, and also to consider the views of those 'midlife' people who will be the older population in the near future.

The Strategy is a robust and accurate representation of, and response to the differences and commonalities within the different communities that comprise the Whangarei District. It reflects a consultation process that has engaged a range of community organisations, tangata whenua and individuals.

The Strategy is also 'whole of Government' focused. In other words, the Strategy does not focus solely on Council's service delivery role in relation to older people. It also maps out other roles for Council, including those of facilitator, supporter and advocate on behalf of the District's older people, in relation to relevant government agencies and departments, and community organisations and initiatives.

The development of strong, trusting and sustainable partnerships with other sectors is required to ensure that maximum value is added to the outcomes sought by Council through this Strategy.

Finally, Council's Positive Ageing Strategy is about encouraging the development of positive attitudes about ageing and older people across all age groups within the community, to support the full implementation of this Strategy and the achievement of its goals.

Definitions

‘Older people’

The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy defines ‘older people’ as those who are over the age of 65 years.

Statistics from the Ministry of Health also relate to two groupings of older people – those from 65 to 74 years, and those who are 75 years and over. These groupings are reflected where Ministry of Health information has been used.

The Statistics New Zealand Census collects information about older people under two categories, people aged 65 years and over, and people aged 85 years and over.

Increasingly as life expectancy lengthens, new terminology is being used to describe different age cohorts within the population of older people.

A distinction is increasingly being made between those older people over 65 years old and those who are over 80, or over 85 years old, as people aged over 80 years old often have higher needs than those in the younger age group.

The term ‘old older people’ is sometimes used to describe people over 80 or 85 years of age, although some statistics still use the term ‘over 80 years’ to describe this group.

‘Baby boomer’

The terms ‘baby boomer’ and ‘the baby boom generation’ describes the population cohort that was born in the post World War Two ‘baby boom’ between the years of 1946 and 1964. ‘Midlife’, ‘people in their middle years’ and ‘part of the future ageing population’ are also terms used to refer to this group of people.

‘Ageism’ and ‘age discrimination’

The terms ‘ageism’ and ‘age discrimination’ describe any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or a group because of age; or any assignment of roles in society, made purely on the basis of age.

Context

International

International recognition of the importance of meeting the needs of older people in contemporary society has grown over the last twenty years.

The first international policy statement on behalf of older people, the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, was endorsed by the United Nations in 1982. It aligns with other important policies, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In 1991 the United Nations General Assembly returned to the United Nations Charter to develop five Principles for Older Persons:

- Independence
- Participation
- Care
- Self fulfillment
- Dignity

The United Nations designated 1999 as the Year of the Older Person, promoting these principles with the theme 'Towards a society for all ages'.

1999 also saw the Macau Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific endorsed by the United Nations. This plan of action addressed seven areas of concern for countries in the region, including New Zealand:

- The social position of older persons
- Older persons and the family
- Health and nutrition
- Housing, transportation, and the environment
- Older persons and the market
- Income security, maintenance, and employment, and
- Social services and the community¹

National

International positive ageing themes were picked up in New Zealand by groups such as Age Concern, which developed from grass roots organisations to provide information on, and to assess and monitor older people's needs. Other national groups such as Grey Power emerged and focus their activity on promoting more general priorities of older people.

Around the same time, other groups that had traditionally concerned themselves with the welfare of people, for example, the Maori Women's Welfare League, community and Iwi organisations, also began to refocus their activities on a 'positive ageing' model, and to develop specific programmes to address the issues and needs of older people.

In 1990, the Government recognised the specific needs of older people by establishing an Office of Senior Citizens, and in 2001 the Office launched New Zealand's Positive Ageing Strategy, which was based on the following vision:

a society where people can age positively, where older people are highly valued and where they are recognized as an integral part of families and communities.

... New Zealand will be a positive place in which to age when people can say they live in a society that values them, acknowledges their contributions and encourages their participation.²

The Strategy developed a National Framework for Positive Ageing, with ten Positive Ageing priority goals aimed at improving older people's quality of life:

¹ Macau Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific. UNESCAP Introduction, 1999

² The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy, MSD, 2001 p13

- Equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people
- Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people
- Affordable and accessible transport options for older people
- Older people feel safe and secure and can 'age in place.'

A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people

- Older people living in rural communities are not disadvantaged when accessing services
- People of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people
- Elimination of ageism and promotion of flexible working options
- Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation.

Local Government

Since 2001, initially in response to the lead taken by the Office of Senior Citizens and then because of changes to councils' role through the Local Government Act (2002), local authorities throughout the country have been redefining their responsibilities with regard to community and sector group needs, including those of older people.

The Local Government Act (2002) gave councils a generalised power relating to the performance of their role, which is:

- to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their communities
- to make democratic decisions by and on behalf of those communities, based on identified community priorities
- to make sustainable decisions (i.e. that will not have any negative effects on future generations)

The Act also outlined governance and consultation principles, including the importance of open and transparent governance structures, access to information, the ability and opportunity to present views in a format appropriate to the needs of the people presenting the views, the need for councils to give due consideration to views presented, and for processes to be in place for consulting with Maori.

The Act is based on the premise that local government exists for the benefit of members of communities, who elect councils, provide the funding and enjoy the benefits of the services that councils provide.

The emphasis has moved away from local authorities as autonomous and discrete deliverers of services, to local authorities as responsive, collaborative facilitators of community outcomes.

The Act gives scope for different communities to identify their own priorities, and to develop and pursue different visions of their futures, rather than the 'one size fits all' approach implicit in the traditional design of local government law.

Over the last few years, this has led many local authorities to developing Positive Ageing Strategies that:

- acknowledge older people as an important and growing sector within local communities
- position councils to respond to the current and future community needs of older people
- take account of older people in relation to councils' own work programmes

Comments from the older persons' strategies of other local authorities reflect councils' acknowledgement of older people as:

- important and valued members of the community (and) ... active participants in improving their quality of life

New Plymouth City Council (2004)

- healthier, more independent and active than previous generations

Tasman District and Nelson City Councils (2004)

- encompass(ing) a diverse range of experience and cultural backgrounds ... the special role older people play in different cultural settings is acknowledged

Dunedin City Council (2004)

- valued, respected and included

South Taranaki District Council (2004)

Mission

Council's mission is: creating the ultimate living environment

Its vision is

to be a vibrant, attractive and thriving District by delivering sustainable lifestyles based around our unique environment; the envy of New Zealand and recognised world-wide.

Whangarei District Council Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) outlines what people in the District have identified as their priorities for Council, and Council's plans to achieve those priorities.

The LTCCP process identified five community outcomes:

- a community which enjoys and treasures its natural and cultural values
- a District that is safe and crime free
- a District with growing business and employment opportunities
- a community that is healthy and educated
- a District with lots of community facilities and programmes for all ages.

As the territorial local authority, Council has a role to play through its strategic and annual planning processes:

- facilitating solutions to local needs
- advocating on behalf of the local community to central government, other local authorities and other agencies
- developing local resources
- managing local infrastructure including both physical and community infrastructure
- environmental management
- planning for the future needs of the local District³.

As well as the District Plan, Council has developed a range of plans and strategies that relate to specific areas of responsibility, including its:

- Open Space Strategy - management of parks and recreation
- Waste Management Plan
- Coastal Management Plan
- Urban Growth Strategy, and
- Whangarei District Economic Development Plan.

Council is also cognisant of its responsibilities for community sectors, with initiatives developed from a Youth Forum in 2003 being an example of Council's role towards the development of general social wellbeing in the District. The development of Council's Positive Ageing Strategy fits clearly within its mandate of care for its citizens.

Council's participation in the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy has the following advantages, that it:

- reflects Council's responsibility to work to improve the quality of life of older people
- provides a mechanism through which the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy can become a reality for the local community within the Whangarei District
- strategically aligns and communicates local initiatives which reflect best practice to guide future decision-making and action by Council
- takes into account current and projected future needs of older people in the District and other relevant Council strategies, and
- provides a framework for checking progress, revising and making changes, and for keeping a focus on action and outcomes

³ WDC Local Governance Statement p4

Overview of the background of Council’s Positive Ageing Strategy

Vienna International Plan of Action 1982	
UN Principles for Older Persons 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ - Independence - Participation - Care - Self fulfilment - Dignity
Macau Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ - The social position of older persons - Older persons and the family - Health and nutrition - Housing, transportation and the environment - Older persons and the market - Income security, maintenance & employment - Social services and the community
NZ Positive Ageing Strategy 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ - Income - Health - Housing - Transport - Safety - Range of services - Rural communities not disadvantaged - Positive attitudes to ageing - Employment - Participation
Local Government Act 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ - Social wellbeing - Cultural wellbeing - Environmental wellbeing - Economic wellbeing
WDC Long Term Council Community Plan/ Community Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ - Enjoy and treasure natural and cultural values - Safe and crime free - Business and employment opportunities - Healthy and educated - Community facilities and programmes for all ages
WDC Annual Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ - Council’s Business is the Community’s Business
WDC Positive Ageing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ageing in Our Place

Brief Council profile

Demographic overview

The Whangarei District covers the lower eastern section of Northland. It extends from Bland Bay in the north to Langs Beach in the south and westwards toward Dargaville.

Whangarei District's 2001 population was 68,0914, a 2% increase in the five years from 1996. There were slightly more women (34,965) than men (33,126), and 22% of the total District's population was of Maori descent (15,369).

The most recent available statistics (2003) show the District's population as being 71,400, with current projected growth to 75,900 by 2021. This appears to be a conservative estimate, however, with indications pointing to a regional growth spurt.

While the Far North District is picked to experience the largest population increase in the region, mid-life and older people will continue to migrate to the Whangarei District for business, recreation, lifestyle and retirement purposes. The mild climate, strengthening economy, housing and land prices that are still lower than national average, increasing ease of access to Auckland, proximity to the coast and beaches and a growing range of sporting and cultural activities will continue to be 'pull' factors for this population sector.

Whangarei City was an established Maori community prior to European settlement around 1839 and its first local government records date from 1860. The city is the main commercial and service centre in Northland. The government agency sector delivers a diverse range of services from this centre to the rest of the region, and the local forestry, farming, marine and engineering industries in particular are strong contributors to the regional and national economies.

The deep water port and oil refinery at Marsden Point, and the cement works at Portland are all examples of local industry that have helped to underpin Whangarei's more recent growth after some years of suffering from economic downturn.

For example, unemployment in the Whangarei District is now the lowest in 17 years, having dropped by 24% over the 2003-04 period. There were only 1366 people in receipt of unemployment benefit in August 2005.

While almost two thirds of the District's population live in the urban area itself (46,047 people, 27.7% of whom are Maori) ⁶, there is a growing trend towards lifestyle blocks and rural living on the outskirts of the city, particularly towards the District's east coast, and on the fertile ex-farmland to the west of the city. ⁷

Older People in Whangarei – a Profile

The most recent census data shows that in 2001 Whangarei had a slightly higher proportion of people over 65 years of age (9,567 people, or 14% of the District's total population), compared to the national figure of 12.1% of the total population. The significantly higher number of women compared to the men within this group of people of 65 plus years reflects the lower life expectancy rates of men.

In 2001, 9,147 people aged over 65 years and living in the Whangarei District received National Superannuation or Veterans payments, and 1,668 received other superannuation income.

The most recent figures available (June 2005) show that there are 11,333 people receiving National Superannuation, Veterans or Transitional Retirement Benefits.⁸

Reflecting the trend in the overall population, older Whangarei people (especially people 85 years and older) are likely to be highly urbanised, especially concentrated in the central city suburbs – Regent, Mairtown, Kensington, and the Avenues area. This reflects the fact that many old, older people need to be near medical services and/or live in residential care that is primarily located in the urban centre.

The 2001 Census showed that 70% of all Whangarei people over 65 years owned their own homes, slightly less than the national figure (76%).

The 2001 national median personal income of all people aged 65 years and over was \$13,100, compared with \$21,200 for the 15 – 64 age group, and \$11,700 for older Maori. The median personal income across all age groups in Whangarei was \$16,400.

⁴ Census 2001, Statistics New Zealand

⁵ Census 1996, Statistics New Zealand

⁶ Regional Profile 2001 Statistics New Zealand, p27

⁷ Whangarei District Council Strategic Plan 2002-2017, p7

⁸ Paid to unemployed people between 55 and 65 years

Generally, however, the profile of Whangarei's older people reflects the national profile of older New Zealanders:

Maori have a lower life expectancy than non Maori – 68.6 years for Maori men and 69.8 years for Maori women, compared to a life expectancy for the total population of 84.9 years for women and 81.5 years for men⁹

The majority of over 65 year olds (75.8% in 1996) live in a family situation or in smaller accommodation, close to facilities or institutional care

70% of older men and 40% of older women were living with a spouse or partner (1996 Census)

More than half of all people over 65 years of age have a disability - rising to two thirds in the over 75 years age group

45% of older people received support in kind from extended family over the previous 12 months, and this support increases with age

Women (55%) are more likely than men (44%) to have daily contact with family and friends

Future population trends

Whangarei District's future population profile is also likely to reflect many of the national population trends, which include a predicted increase in the proportion of people aged over 65 years from 12% currently to 25% by 2050, and an associated decline in the proportion of people aged 15 to 64 years from 65% currently to 59% in 2050.

Whangarei's older residents will make up an increasing proportion of the District's population. In 2050 the number of people over 65 years will make up 25% of the total population, compared to 14% currently. It is estimated that the population of people aged 65 years and over will comprise some 15,500 people, 1,400 of whom will be Maori.

The median age of the Whangarei population will rise. In 2001, the median age was 36.7 years.¹⁰ By 2015 it is expected to be 38 years. The Maori median age is expected to be 25.7 years, while the median age for the Pakeha/European population will be about 47.5 years.

There will be a consequent increase in dependency ratios; that is, the number of older and younger people in the non-working (i.e. not employed) age groups will increase in relation to the number of people in the working population¹¹.

There are currently 18 people aged 65 and over for every 100 people aged between 15 and 64 years. This ratio is expected to rise to 38 per 100 by 2031.¹²

In 2051 the population share of those aged over 65 years will more than double, while the youngest share will contract by nearly one third.¹³

In a parallel development, there will be an economy where many older people will both need, and want, to continue to work.¹⁴

In 2001, 11.5% of all people aged over 65 years old were in the work force (30% of males and 15% of women aged 65 years or more). 53% of these people worked part time, with farming accounting for about a quarter of this employment.

- Women, Maori and rural older people tend to spend more time in informal unpaid work outside the home than their male, non-Maori, urban counterparts.¹⁵

Emerging themes and issues

While most older people will continue to live in their own homes with a partner, there will be an increasing proportion of older people who do not own their own homes and who will live alone within both the urban

⁹ Older New Zealanders 65 and Beyond, Statistics New Zealand, 2004, Chapter 4

¹⁰ Whangarei District Council Strategic Plan 2002-2017 p8

¹¹ A dependency ratio compares the working age population with the size of the non working age population – older and younger age groups.

¹² Positive Ageing in New Zealand. Diversity, participation and change. Status Report 2001 Ministry of Social Development

¹³ Population Ageing. The Future of Work – Changing Workforce. Department Of Labour Future of Work Project 2005

¹⁴ DOL Labour Market Report June 2005

¹⁵ Older New Zealanders – 65 and beyond 2004 Statistics NZ

area and the rural hinterland. These people will need support to maintain their independence and social connectedness.

There will be more single older women than single older men. These people will, because of higher life expectancy rates, live longer as a single person, and may need increased support, for example in the areas of housing and transport, to mitigate their historically lower wages and earlier labour force participation patterns.

Increased life expectancies will see the proportion of Maori aged over 65 years slowly but gradually increase. This will require Council to strengthen and illustrate its commitment to dialogue and connectedness with Maori, and underlines the need to consider a wider range of culturally appropriate housing options, community, home care and residential services, programmes and activities.

Increasing numbers of older people who do not own their own homes may be unable to meet private sector rental costs and may turn to both central and local government to provide affordable and appropriate housing. The over 85 year olds, who generally have different social and physical needs to the under 85 year age group and higher rates of degenerative conditions, will require specialist housing, health care, transport and home care services.

Infrastructural development to meet the need for housing and associated services for older people will require Council to engage in significant forward planning and additional community investment, with support from central government.

Council can also take a leadership role in creating a diverse workforce and modelling an economy where knowledge and experience are valued. Having Council modelling elder-friendly workplaces and employment practices to Whangarei businesses will also minimise the risk of an increase in the incidence of ageism and casualisation of the older work force.

The older people of the future - 'baby boomers' who are now becoming mid-lifers (40-54 year olds) - will have priorities that will differ from those of today's older people.

The expectations and needs of this group have matured in a society characterised by increasing choice, immediacy and mobility. They are better educated than their current counterparts and want to work and play beyond the traditional 'retirement' age. While they expect to have options and choices of age-appropriate services, they will also want and expect to retain their mobility and independence.

This group will look to reconceptualise what 'being old' means, and their sheer numbers will give them the power and influence to do that.

All of these factors will require Council's ongoing consideration in terms of the future development needs related to the growing sector of older people within its community, in terms of housing, transport, employment, education and social services, health and wellness, safety, home and residential care.

The starting point for this is the guide provided by the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy:

The objective of strategies for older people world wide is to plan for an improved standard of living as the population ages and to support people, as they grow older, in leading productive lives in the economy and society.¹⁶

¹⁶ The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy, MSD, Section 2: Towards a Society for All Ages. p 11

Positive Ageing Strategy

Council's Positive Ageing Strategy has been developed through:

- 1 Taking the five Community Outcomes outlined in Council's Long Term Council Community Plan as the overarching framework
 - enjoyment of natural and cultural values; safety; employment and business; health and education; community facilities and programmes.
- 2 Aligning the ten principles of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy with the Community Outcomes/Council's Long Term Council Community Plan
 - income; housing; transport; safety; ageing in place; cultural choices; equity for rural communities; attitudinal change; employment and participation.
- 3 Developing 10 objectives on which to base Ageing in our Place, Council's Positive Ageing Strategy
 - These have been developed in a way that integrates the above two key bodies of work.

The consultation process then involved

- 4 Identifying specific, action-based recommendations that relate to Council's internal practices, business operations and external operations
 - these recommendations give practical meaning to each of the ten objectives

Finally

- 5 The recommendations of Council's Positive Ageing Strategy will be incorporated in Council's strategic planning.

The Strategy has been developed in a way that is aligned with these key documents and processes to demonstrate that issues for older people are both interrelated and related to those of the entire community.

They are also the responsibility of a range of agencies. Council's main role, in aiming to achieve the objectives of its Positive Ageing Strategy, is therefore to facilitate co-ordinated, cross-sector and cross-agency actions that address the issues identified as priorities for older people.

The concept of 'Positive Ageing' embraces a number of factors, including health, financial security, independence, self fulfilment, community attitudes, personal safety and security and the physical environment.

The underpinning premise is that the years of 'older age' should be both viewed and experienced positively. The focus is therefore not only on the experience of older individuals, but also on younger generations' attitudes, expectations and actions regarding ageing and older people. 17

¹⁷ The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy, MSD, Section 2: Towards a Society for All Ages. p 11

Community Outcomes – Alignment to New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principles

Whangarei District Council Community Outcomes	New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principles
A community which enjoys and treasures its natural and cultural values	<p>A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people</p> <p>People of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people</p>
A District that is safe and crime free	<p>Older people feel safe and secure and can ‘age in place’</p> <p>Affordable and accessible transport options for older people</p>
A District with growing business and employment opportunities	<p>Secure and adequate income for older people</p> <p>Elimination of ageism and promotion of flexible working options</p>
A community that is healthy and educated	<p>Equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people</p> <p>Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people</p>
A District with lots of community facilities and programmes for all ages	<p>Older people living in rural communities are not disadvantaged when accessing services</p> <p>Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation</p>

Positive Ageing Strategy

Objectives

- Objective 1 The cultural diversity of older people living in the Whangarei District is acknowledged and celebrated

- Objective 2 The knowledge, skills and experience of older people living in the Whangarei District are taken into account, valued and utilised

- Objective 3 Safety initiatives are developed that meet the needs and match the concerns of older people living in the Whangarei District

- Objective 4 Older people living in the Whangarei District can travel safely and easily to their chosen destinations within the District

- Objective 5 Older people living in the Whangarei District have a range of options to ensure their income meets their immediate and changing needs

- Objective 6 Older people find the Whangarei District a great place to work

- Objective 7 Older people living in the Whangarei District have the information and support needed to ensure a healthy lifestyle

- Objective 8 Older people living in the Whangarei District have access to 'healthy housing' options

- Objective 9 Older people living in the Whangarei District have access to community meeting places that cater for their needs

- Objective 10 Older people living in the Whangarei District are encouraged to continue 'learning for life'

Introduction

Comment

As with all sectors of our community, a main concern for older people is that their views are recognised. Long before any specific actions are considered, people need to feel that their positions and ideas are acknowledged, and that there are processes in place that ensure that they can participate and be involved in decisions that impact on them.

Councils often develop partnership relationships in order to facilitate special interest or community requirements that require more specialist expertise than Councils may have themselves.

Council already supports a number of community fora, the best known being the Whangarei Council of Social Services Community Networkers, and the Mayors Forum.

The objective of these fora is to facilitate an interagency (central and local government and community) focus on local issues and needs, and to plan, co-ordinate and undertake activities to meet these needs

Council is establishing a formal partnership with the District's disability sector through the development of a reference group (DSRG). Representatives of Council and representatives of the disability sector will meet on a regular basis to facilitate the resolution of issues faced by people with disabilities throughout the District.

Council's terms of reference for the Disability Sector Reference Group provide a model or parallel on which to develop such a group representing the interests, perspectives and expertise of older people:

Other territorial authorities have developed similar structures specific to issues and sector groups such as older people. New Plymouth City Council, for example, established a Positive Ageing Group in 2001, made up of representatives of organisations with a connection to older people.

Its Positive Ageing Group (PAG) is led by sector representatives and has developed into a Trust, which networks with key stakeholders on behalf of older people, identifies local issues affecting older people, and develops and monitors strategies to meet their needs.

Council has designated a staff member from the Community Development Team to work with the PAG, and allocated some resources to the Group to assist it in its role.

This type of Group could provide a conduit for the views and priorities of older people in Whangarei, and an opportunity for Council to partner with the sector to ensure that effective liaison, support and development is provided in the District.

Action

A Positive Ageing Advisory Group would help Council to turn its Positive Ageing Strategy into action. Regular fora/community meetings would enable interested individuals and organisations to have some input regarding their ideas, concerns and issues and keep the Group in touch with the wider community.

The main role of the Group would be to oversee the implementation of the Strategy's recommendations and to develop a focussed work programme on issues arising from activities outlined in the Strategy.

The structure and membership of a Positive Ageing Advisory Group will need further consideration, as will the need to ensure accountability back to older people, and group members need to provide diversity in terms of knowledge and expertise. The following recommendations are based on ideas raised through the public consultation process:

Recommendations

The Group be empowered to develop timeframes and priorities for action for Council's Positive Ageing Strategy

Membership to include the current Positive Ageing Strategy Reference Group but be broadened to include wider representation of older people's interests

Nominations to be called for publicly

Membership to be based on individuals' skills and knowledge of issues concerning older people now and in the future

Council to take into account the need for the Group to also include representatives of appropriate government agencies, community organisations, Maori (e.g. Te Taumata o Kaumatua, Kuia), young people and the business sector

Council to ensure that the needs and interests of older people living outside the city boundaries are taken into account

Council to appoint a Councillor and/or a Community Development Division worker to represent Council at meetings of the Group

Council to provide the Group with administrative resources e.g. support services

The Group to report quarterly to Council's Community Enterprises Committee through the Community Development Team

The Group be established with a view to having a ten year timeframe, with revolving membership (e.g. a 2 year term for members) to ensure a community mandate is established and consistent through its lifetime

Positive Ageing Strategy -

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A community which enjoys and treasures its natural and cultural values

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people

Objective 1

The cultural diversity of older people living in the Whangarei District is acknowledged and celebrated

Comment

Whangarei's overall population is predominantly European/Pakeha, and Maori. The numbers of Asian, and Pacific peoples living within the District are relatively small - in 2001, they were 1,400 and 1,500 respectively, but these ethnic populations are expected to grow, along with the proportion of older people within them.

The Maori proportion of the District's population is also predicted to grow. In 2001, the District's Maori population was 17,300, with 700 people aged over 65 years (6% of the District's population of people aged 65 years or over). By 2016 the District's total Maori population is expected to be 21,400, with 1,400 people aged over 65 years. By 2051, Maori representation is expected to have grown to 9% of the District's population of people aged 65 years and over.

The Pakeha/European population of older people in Whangarei is comprised of a rich ethnic mix (e.g. English, Scots, Dalmation, Dutch), and the smaller communities of Pacific and Asian older people similarly represent a range of ethnicities. Many of these people continue to practice and celebrate their cultural values and have valuable, fascinating stories to tell of their own histories and their involvement in the District's development.

Action

Council is in the process of establishing more formalised relationships with Maori throughout the District. In order to facilitate the development of these relationships, Council employs an Iwi Liaison Officer and is in the process of establishing a sub-committee to make recommendations to council relevant to the committee's terms of reference.

The Terms of Reference which have been adopted for this committee are:

the provision of opportunities for Maori to contribute to Council's decision making process

fostering the development of Maori capacity to contribute, and

providing information to Maori for these purposes

Council's willingness to establish relationships with Maori in the District now means ensuring that in practice the execution of its day to day work will be carried out in a manner that is cognisant of the roles Maori play within the District, and reflective of Maori cultural values relating to people, land and the environment.

This will include, for example, recognising the central role of older Maori within whanau and the position and influence of kaumatua and kuia as senior members of their whanau, hapu and iwi.

Actively engaging kaumatua and kuia representatives in the implementation of this Strategy will assist with the development of District plans, policies and activities that provide appropriate services to Maori.

Kaumatua and kuia who are encouraged to contribute can play a valuable educational role to inform, promote and encourage the understanding and practice of Maori values within Council.

From this platform, Council can then move to supporting activities that acknowledge the importance of the experiences and insights of older people from the diversity of cultures within the District. Whangarei's older population needs opportunities to share, display and maintain the meaning and history behind their cultural practices.

This will foster older people's individual and collective wellbeing, nurture intergenerational relationships and increase community understanding and respect for the full diversity of Whangarei's older people. It will also ensure that the stories from the past that influence our present are treasured and preserved, rather than lost for ever.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can actively engage with and include older people from a range of cultures, for example:

- Ensuring that its promotions, written communications and technology meets the needs of kaumatua and kuia, and older people from other cultures
- Developing and promoting links to translation and interpreter services available in the District
- Providing education for staff on Tikanga Maori and Maori values and practices regarding land, sea, resources, taonga, people and the environment that draw on the knowledge of kaumatua and kuia
- Ensuring that Council staff have the background/historical information they need to provide a knowledgeable and seamless service to older people (e.g. enhancing links to heritage information)

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can actively engage with and learn from kaumatua and kuia from the Whangarei District, for example:

- Ensuring that information on Council's governance structure, legal requirements and administrative practices meet the needs of kaumatua and kuia and older people from other ethnic groups
- Working with Whangarei Museum and the Whangarei Library to enhance and promote their collections through the involvement of kaumatua and kuia, and older people from a range of cultures
- Recognising that older people are part of whanau and families, as well as individuals, in the development of policies, plans and procedures

That Council consider ways in which its external operations can encourage and lend support to other bodies to ensure that the cultural histories of older Whangarei District residents are retained for future generations, for example:

- Supporting groups to promote cultural activities e.g. working with the Waipu Scottish community to support older people's participation in this community's annual celebration
- Continuing to work with Maori to establish and promote annual Matariki celebrations
- Supporting individuals and groups to record and publish oral histories, especially Maori oral history, the story of Whangarei and its communities

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A community which enjoys and treasures its natural and cultural values

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

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

Objective 2

The knowledge, skills and experience of older people living in the Whangarei District are taken into account, valued and utilised

Comment

While older people are often very close to teenagers such as grandchildren and great grandchildren, they can have a level of anxiety and fear about young people in general, and particularly groups of young people. This is particularly true in public situations and in some areas (e.g. the Mall), where older people can feel vulnerable and less secure.

Young people's exuberance, fashion sense and behaviour can sometimes be perceived as threatening by older people. Equally, young people may feel judged by older people and can sometimes react by showing them an apparent lack of respect. The causes of this are various, but may reflect factors such as an increasing breakdown in community cohesion and the traditional intergenerational family structure, and consequent lack of contact on both sides.

While the media continues to portray youth as the ideal and avoids positive imagery of older people, this gap in tolerance and understanding is likely to continue.

It is likely that present-day mid-lifers' attitudes to ageing will have a positive impact on future community attitudes to ageing and on the breaking down of stereotypes.¹⁸

The traditional practice of intergenerational contact based on learning continues in Maori communities. For example, the Otangarei Marae runs an unfunded marae - based programme whereby younger people assist kaumatua and kuia to undertake their voluntary work, allowing the elders to share information and learning about cultural practices and involving young people in marae, hapu and iwi affairs.

Central government social policy has recently recognised this practice as beneficial to the wider community. The Ministry of Social Development through its family assistance programme has begun to fund the development and co-ordination of older 'SAGE' volunteers to offer mentoring to young families across a range of issues from parenting and domestic to employment skills.

Action

Council has developed a set of youth policy goals, employed a designated youth worker and plans to set up a Youth Reference Group subcommittee. Its Youth Strategy developed in 2003 identified four areas to address:

- 1 Health, wellbeing and safety
- 2 Lifestyle and culture
- 3 Education and future direction
- 4 Entertainment and recreation

Council's youth worker indicates that Council's work with youth and other groups on these four areas had resulted in a decrease in the numbers of reported incidents amongst young people, and that problems in the central business District were caused by only a small number of young people.

There are many opportunities for Council to lead contact between younger and older people by example. Council can help to portray positive interaction between older people and youth through the events it supports, as well as using positive images in Council promotions and publications of older people going about their lives. Ensuring an effective link between Council's youth-related activities and the work of the Positive Ageing Group will be important in this regard.

¹⁸ Positive Ageing in New Zealand Diversity, Participation and Change Status Report 2001, Ministry of Social Development, p90

Ngati Hine Hauora Whanui was funded by the Ministry of Social Development in 2005 to deliver the SAGE mentoring programme in Whangarei. This programme involves older people passing on skills and knowledge and is aimed at increasing the contact between younger and older people.

Organisations utilising the knowledge and skills of older people for older people, such as Age Concern, provide a range of services including:

- accredited visiting – where volunteers visit socially isolated older people
- dedicated carer relief– supporting family members caring for older people
- elder abuse and neglect prevention – to help where older people are at risk of abuse
- advocacy - referral, information and support

Council needs to liaise with these groups to ensure that its own information services to older people operate from an effective and up to date database.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can take account of the particular needs of older people, for example:

Regularly evaluating Council's standards of customer service to ensure that they meet the needs of older people

Providing a telecommunications systems that is welcoming and accessible for older people (e.g. access to a 'live' help-desk operator, direct access to key personnel or advocates, effective call return service, and a system responsive to the needs of the hearing impaired)

Ensuring that its written documents are accessible to older people (e.g. large print, plain English, mailed out upon request)

Ensuring that customer service areas at its main office and service centres are welcoming and accessible to older people (e.g. sufficient, appropriate and pleasant seating and waiting areas, easily accessible toilets)

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can value and utilise the knowledge, skills and experience of older people, for example:

Liaising with local organisations to ensure that Council has an up-to-date and wide-ranging database of information on Council and other services relevant to older people

Giving particular emphasis in its Civic Honours awards to acknowledging voluntary intergenerational work

Exploring the possibility of scheduling a monthly customer service counter for older people both within their communities (e.g. at Age Concern), and at its main office and service centres

Initiating Councillor clinics specifically targeted at older people, discussing issues of concern to older people

That Council consider ways in which its external operations can encourage and lend support to other bodies working in the area of positive ageing promotion, for example:

Recognising older people as part of whanau and families, as well as individuals by encouraging the development of intergenerational and whanau / whole-of-family activities

Supporting community organisations that are initiating mentoring programmes that enable older people to share their skills with younger people

Working with Age Concern and other sector and community groups to support and promote annual activities, e.g. Family and Older Persons Day (1 October) and International Volunteers Day (5 December)

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A District that is safe and crime free

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

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

Objective 3

Safety initiatives are developed that meet the needs and match the concerns of older people living in the Whangarei District

Comment

Crime research indicates that older people have the highest fear but lowest risk of being a victim of crime, while youth on the other hand have the lowest fear and highest risk.

Media reports that highlight instances of crime and victimisation may well impact more on older people, who tend to watch TV news and have a higher newspaper readership than younger people. The retirement/care industry reports that the fears, concerns and perceptions older people have about their personal safety are major motivators for entry to a retirement village.

Partly this reflects older people's – and in particular older women's – general sense of physical vulnerability that can generate high levels of concern about the possibility of becoming a victim.

Though reports of incidents and levels and seriousness of crime within the central city area have reduced, in part due to the liquor ban in the CBD at night, many older people still perceive themselves to be at risk of crime¹⁹ and unsafe in their home urban areas.

Anecdotal reports from residents in inner city suburbs such as Regent and Kensington (where older people predominate), indicate that they are suffering from the transference of 'socialising' from the central city in response to the liquor ban.

These reports reflect the perception that the level of public drunkenness, intimidation, noise, assault, vandalism, theft, and general disorderly behaviour has increased over the last two years since the ban. However Police figures show no evidence of an increase in public drunkenness or associated behaviours in these areas. Also, crime and public drunkenness in the CBD has reduced by up to 50%.

Perceptions about a lack of safety can however serve to exacerbate some older people's sense of insecurity, and present the risk that they unnecessarily curtail their own social participation, particularly in the evenings and weekends.

Council could help to offset these fears and misinformation by promoting the Police statistics on the outcome of the liquor ban and updating them on other current initiatives designed to improve safety in the District.

Older people living in rural areas can be vulnerable to crime because of their physical location. Many crimes, in particular theft and burglary (which can lead to associated assault) are committed in rural areas by people from outside the community.

Rural Support programmes reduce the number and severity of crimes and increase the ability of the Police to catch and charge offenders. Retired people are the most likely to be active and committed to developing and maintaining Neighbourhood Support programmes in rural - and urban – areas, mainly because of their presence at home during daylight hours and their strong local networks.

While older people are concerned with safety issues, major catastrophic events are outside of the experience and concern of most of the population and a generalised 'it won't happen to me' attitude exists. Many people have little knowledge about Civil Defence and emergency management.

The threat of a major catastrophic event requiring civil defence management is limited for the Whangarei District, although forest fires, flooding and tsunami are potential threats. Older people, especially those living on their own and in more isolated areas, are most at risk from such events.

Older people, especially those in rural areas, are also more at risk from fire, being more likely to live in older homes with old wiring, to use older models of appliances and to use open fires for heating.

¹⁹ WDC Inner City Safety Audit (2000)

Older people suffer from an increased incident of accidents in the home, including preventable falls and burns, which can lead to social exclusion and deteriorating health.

Other physical features related to safety and safe access to services can inhibit older people's quality of life and their ability to enjoy public activities, community and recreational facilities, and even simple daily functions such as shopping. Such features include:

- uneven and slippery paving tiles
- footpaths without ramps
- unsafe and inaccessible community facilities and walkways in recreational areas
- lack of street lighting
- unclear signage
- layout of parks
- concealed access ways
- unsafe, unhygienic and inaccessible public (toilet) conveniences
- public spaces that hinder access
- lack of parking close to amenities for older people and those with disabilities
- lack of appropriate seating, shelter and rest areas.

Badly constructed and/or repaired footpaths, footpaths that lack pram or mobility scooter crossings or are in disrepair, and paving in shopping centres which is badly fitted or slippery when wet, pose real threats for older people who are physically unconfident or have mobility difficulties.

In rural Whangarei a lack of, or unsafe, footpaths increases the danger to walkers as well as cyclists competing with road traffic. Footpaths are essential, especially those linking community facilities (e.g. between halls, schools and retail areas). Being able to walk to these facilities encourages fitness and decreases the social isolation of older people.

Council needs to acknowledge older people's concerns about the District's footpaths as this is one of their highest priorities in terms of safety and participation in community life.

Taking practical action on work of this type demonstrates Council's commitment to integrating safety audit recommendations and action on safety issues for older people into its core activities.

Action

Council has a strong commitment to community safety. A Community Development Advisor position focused on safety was integrated into Council in March 2004. This position gives Council the potential to increase its level of support to older people by promoting, supporting and extending Neighbourhood Support activities throughout the District.

The development of Neighbourhood Support committees could provide a catalyst for a variety of localised safety-related initiatives, leading to quality 'neighbourhood community' development.

Council has responded to reports of 'boy racers' travelling at speed through the city and residential streets by constructing chicanes, humps, bumps and roundabouts in some inner city suburbs to slow traffic. Council may undertake this type of work depending on crash reduction studies and complaints received.

Council initiatives and support provided to youth activity groups and community initiatives have acted to reduce the incidence of youth offending, especially in the inner city, and a proposal to extend the central city liquor ban bylaw to allow it to operate at all times and to include Riverside Drive is currently in the submission phase. Council will however still need to consider how to resolve the perception of disruptive behaviour held by residents in Whangarei's inner suburbs.

Council has responded positively to support community safety initiatives, for example, drawing up a service agreement with Maori Wardens who have been engaged to carry out community patrols around the CBD during the day.

A Central City safety audit in 2000 reviewed the inner city's physical features, for example lighting, concealed areas in parks and car parks. - from the perspective of reducing inner city crime. Council responded to the audit's findings by adopting 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design' (CPTED) principles that will be used to increase safety in the District over time through the addressing of specific design issues.

The audit recommended a range of solutions for Council to implement through existing budgets, and a number of safety audit objectives have already been met. These include improved lighting at the bus depot and John Street parking building, and improved signage around the CBD. The audit was recently updated and a report is due to Council in November 2005.

As a transitional arrangement Council could advise the public of areas that are potentially unsafe (e.g. slippery tiles, unsafe open spaces) and their repair timeframes.

Council could also extend the scope of safety audits through District-wide safety audits. Because of their past experiences (e.g. the 1930s depression years, war, and natural disasters), today's older people are open to hearing safety messages and preparing for all events. There is potential to enhance the audit process by actively engaging interested sector groups, such as older people or their representative bodies, to ensure that audits explicitly take account of the priorities of the growing number of older residents.

Council could work with other organisations (e.g. fire safety and regional civil defence organisations) to establish regular reminders and interactive training about fire and civil defence emergency procedures at fora where older people are present. This would help to increase older people's awareness, encourage preparedness, and enhance their ability to act appropriately in a civil defence emergency or fire situation.

Council could also partner with the Fire Service and Housing New Zealand Corporation to raise the awareness of the Kotahitanga fire safety programme in rural communities, and to extend the programme to older people in urban areas.

ACC provides a falls prevention programme in partnership with Sport Northland. The programme, which builds strength and agility through exercises derived from modified tai chi, has been widely acknowledged as valuable with regard to injury prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

This programme could be extended to include some of the elements of self defence, in particular assertiveness training, which may assist some older participants to develop a greater sense of personal safety through knowledge and increased confidence.

The focus and reach of the programme could also be extended to older people in rural communities. Council could consider encouraging it to be based in Council-owned community facilities or on marae, and help to promote the programme.

Council could also initiate explicit partnerships with Government agencies and other health and safety sector organisations. Inter-agency work on general health and safety issues affecting older people would both be an efficient use of resources for the organisations, and would assist older people to 'age in place'.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can support the development of safety initiatives that meet the needs and match the concerns of older Whangarei people, for example:

Increasing the focus on crime prevention, injury prevention, emergency preparedness and safety in the home in the annual District wide Council survey

Ensuring that all Council owned facilities meet older people's requirements for safety and safe access to services

Utilising Neighbourhood Support committees as a neighbourhood development strategy, including providing Neighbourhood Support information to all new homeowners in the District

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can support the development of safety initiatives that meet the needs and match the concerns of older Whangarei people, for example:

Conducting community-based safety audits through consultation in order to build a District-wide audit

Implementing a footpath programme for construction and repairs with well publicised schedules and timeframes

Developing a communications strategy targeting key sectors – e.g. older people – that informs them of the outcomes of safety audits and surveys, the liquor ban and other safety initiatives, including providing information about temporarily hazardous areas and alternative routes

Improving the number of accessible, safe, public rest rooms in the District

That Council consider ways in which its external practices can support the development of safety initiatives that meet the needs and match the concerns of older Whangarei people, for example:

- Advocating for more community-based police

- Requesting a review of emergency response services, in particular the 111 system and the practice of 'holding' the phone line during a 111 call
- In conjunction with the Fire Service and HNZA, promoting the smoke alarm project in rural areas and extending it to older people in urban Whangarei
- Identifying sponsorship possibilities for other initiatives aimed at home safety for older people (e.g. free or subsidised security locks on doors and windows)
- Working with the relevant government agencies to extend injury prevention and health and fitness programmes into rural areas through the use of Council-owned facilities, marae and other community facilities.

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A District that is safe and crime free

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

Affordable and accessible transport options for older people

Objective 4

Older people living in the Whangarei District can travel safely and easily to their chosen destinations within the District

Comment

Transport is a major issue for older people wishing to remain independent. The Office of Senior Citizens report 'Coping Without a Car' (November 2004) outlined how lack of access to convenient transport can negatively affect older people's quality of life, limits family and social participation, and increases the risk of dependency, depression and other progressive illnesses related to social isolation, including physical deterioration, nutritional and other issues.

The report indicated that a lack of private transport has a greater effect on older people in rural communities, who have less access to other transport options. Essentially, not having access to transport makes it even more difficult for older people to 'age in place'.

While having and keeping a car is a drain on older people's resources, it is often a necessity, enabling family and social contact, work, shopping and keeping appointments. Ability to retain their use of a car is one of older people's key priorities, one that helps to ensure a level of independence and, especially for men, self-esteem.

Driving can be anxiety inducing for older people. Road works, unexpected route changes, peak traffic, unclear signage in urban areas, or restricted vision and lack of confidence with night driving are all issues for older drivers.

Being able to find car parking which minimises the walking distance to shops and facilities is important. Car parking at the hospital is also an issue for older people, especially when they are ill. While a shuttle is provided to transport people to and from the car park it operates only during office hours. The car park at the hospital is often full, and while the hospital provides some car parks close to its main entrance for emergency use, these are limited in number.

Land Transport New Zealand's 'Safe with Age' driving courses, supported by Age Concern and run through their Centre in Whangarei, have been of immense value to many older drivers, increasing their driving confidence (including the resitting of driving tests), and improving community road safety.

An increasing number of the District's older people live in rural or coastal settlements, or on retirement lifestyle blocks. This means that Council can expect to have a growing rural and coastal 'transport-disadvantaged' population in the future, and that a greater investment in transport services will be required to support these people to be able to 'age in place'.

The Northland Regional Council (NRC) and Council are jointly involved in the provision of public transport services. The NRC is responsible for developing and implementing the Regional Transport Plan and managing the Whangarei bus service contract. Council manages the associated assets, such as the bus terminal and bus shelters.

There are currently two 'accessible' buses (i.e. wheelchair friendly and lowered entry). However these are not exclusively timetabled for specific routes or times, so disabled and older people cannot rely on access to them.

The Northland Regional Council also administers the Total Mobility service through funding provided by Land Transport New Zealand and District Council. NRC works in partnership with a group of age and disability related organisations that provide eligibility assessment services for this service.

Total Mobility provides a 50% taxi fare discount to disabled people over 14 years of age living in urban areas. While eligibility is determined by disability rather than age, a significant proportion of those who use

the service in Whangarei are older people. Of the 922 people currently receiving assistance, 700 have been assessed as eligible by age related organisations.²⁰

The rapidly expanding use of mobility scooters is one of the major urban transport issues of the future. As mid-lifers age and the market for easy-use 1 or 2 person 'non-car' transport becomes more popular and competitive, there is a strong likelihood of a large number of different styles and models of mobility scooters competing with small vehicles and pedestrians for road and footpath space.

This trend raises significant medium-long term transport and traffic and street planning issues for councils, including managing competing needs of pedestrian, motorised travellers and car users throughout the District, but particularly in the central urban area.

In the short term, mobility scooters raise the risk of potential danger to footpath users, particularly older pedestrians.

Walking and cycling are activities which support a range of positive health outcomes, including the slowing of degenerative disease (e.g. diabetes and heart disease). Walking is already an important leisure pursuit of both midlife and older people, and cycling is growing in popularity amongst mid-lifers.

The provision of cycle tracks in urban areas encourages cycling as a recreational activity, is a healthy and inexpensive option to increase personal fitness and mobility, and allows people to adopt an alternative means of transport. The objective of providing/developing cycle tracks is also identified in the Youth Strategy. Many older and midlife people as well as young people could be expected to respond positively to being able to use bike travel in and around the urban areas if they felt assured of a reasonable level of safety.

Action

Council currently provides parking 'discounts' for people over 70 years old, and one disabled car park per approximately 50 metered car park spaces. People with disabilities are able to park in metered spaces at half price if they display their disability card on their dashboards.

Improvements to city bus services (route frequency, coverage and vehicle accessibility) are planned when the current Whangarei bus service contract is reviewed in 2006. Council has also indicated that it plans to work with the NRC and future Whangarei bus service contractors to increase the number of accessible buses in the area.

Future bus services need to be developed in a planned way so that they

- enhance the current provision,
- remain affordable
- are accessible and take account of the needs of their users e.g. elder friendly routes and timetabling
- extend services to rural communities

These elements could be included as tender and contract specifications.

Other creative ideas could enhance Whangarei's bus service for older people in the future.

One example is a Christchurch partnership, which led to the provision of bus services that can be hailed at any point on the route. The driver helps passengers with getting on and off the bus and also with their bags.²¹

Other ideas include the use of smaller vans for rural passengers, the development of a 'round town' shuttle service which takes in the Okara Shopping Centre, and the provision of 'one-off' bus or van services to ensure that older people's desire to attend specific evening shows, festivals and Council sponsored activities, such as Christmas in the Park and the Christmas concert, is not thwarted by lack of accessible transport options.

Council could consider supporting recreational activities for older people by underwriting or subsidising transport services such as bus-trips to shows in Auckland, or a elder-focused weekend 'Beach Bus'. Baby boomers - the older people of the future - have also expressed a desire to have access to a safe evening and night-time shuttle - bus service.

²⁰ Northland Regional Council Total Mobility

²¹ Cited in: Knowles, S. (2004) Puff Power. Preliminary Research into Active Transport in Taranaki. Taranaki Health Promotion Unit. Taranaki District Health Board.

In the future, as the working population ages, Council may need to consider creating secure suburban car parks so people can 'park and ride' to work.

The high demand from older people for Total Mobility means the Service risks running out of funding before the end of the financial year. In the short term, there may be a need to urgently reconsider the subsidy level and implement a part-funding strategy, rather than have the service disappear altogether for some months.

In the longer term, the District's growing elderly population means there is a need to thoroughly review the implementation of the Total Mobility service, including the level of funding, and the spread of the service, in terms of considering the needs of the District's increasing numbers of elderly living in the urban hinterland (e.g. coastal areas, semi-rural areas) who are currently ineligible for the service. A review would allow people to make submissions and suggest alternative, supplementary or additional approaches to the current scope of the Total Mobility operations.

Council is currently conducting a review of bus shelters with the aim of increasing their numbers, replacing lighting and information boards and phasing out tin and concrete shelters. The glass shelters planned as replacements will assist patron visibility and safety, enhancing the attractiveness of bus transport as an option.

The provision of cycle tracks alongside, or in addition to, the walking tracks around the city could also encourage older people to engage in safe and healthy recreational activity.

Mid life people have also voiced a desire for Council to consider the future impact of scooters becoming a major form of transport. For example, a footpath could be developed from Onerahi into town, similar to New Plymouth District Council's mobility scooter- friendly 6 km walkway that connects the suburb of Port Taranaki with the city.

Currently Council provides one wheelchair, located at Forum North, for public use. Some larger retail outlets provide wheelchairs or similar for their customers, and wheelchairs can be hired from the Hospital.

Council could do well to consider increasing the number and location of Council-owned wheelchairs, as well as becoming more future focused about the mobility requirements of citizens. Wellington City Council, for example, has recently developed a free Council-owned mobility scooter service. Scooters can be hired for use around the CBD and waterfront tourist areas for up to four hours, and are available to residents and visitors alike.

In order to achieve the provision of elder friendly, affordable, accessible services, Council could look to develop collaborative partnerships with government agencies and others (e.g. Ministry of Education, business and other community agencies) in order to investigate and implement joint strategies that increase the range of transport options for older people.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can meet the needs of older people living in the Whangarei District to travel safely and easily to their chosen destinations within the District, for example:

- Providing parking permits for Whangarei residents from the age of 65 years
- Directing parking wardens to be more proactive in monitoring the appropriate use of disabled car park spaces
- Exploring the possibility of providing the free hire of wheelchairs and mobility scooters around the central city, including the Town Basin and other shopping areas (e.g. Okara Park)
- Developing draft guidelines for the safe use of mobility scooters in retail areas

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can support the needs of older people living in the Whangarei District to travel safely and easily to their chosen destinations within the District, for example:

- undertaking a public transport needs assessment that includes consultation with older people about future route and timetabling of Whangarei bus services
- Exploring the use of smaller buses and minivans in order to provide transport to rural older people
- Investigating the provision of an inner city, round town shuttle
- Providing special-purpose public transport so that older people can participate in Council sponsored events, shows and festivals
- Working with a range of private/public sector organisations to facilitate the provision of buses for older people to enjoy special, night and weekend events and outings

That Council consider ways in which its external practices support the needs of older people living in the Whangarei District to travel safely and easily to their chosen destinations within the District, for example:

- Working with the Ministry of Education to explore the possibility of transport partnerships in rural and isolated areas of the District
- Discussing with Northland Health the concerns of older people regarding Whangarei Base Hospital parking facilities
- Liaising with NRC to ensure the viability of Total Mobility service, with particular reference to both current demand and future access for older people living in the District's coastal/rural hinterland
- Initiating joint Council/NRC approaches to Government for adequate funding subsidies, so that local government transport planning can explore innovative proposals that take account of the needs of the ageing population.

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A District with growing business and employment opportunities

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

Secure and adequate income for older people

Objective 5

Older people living in the Whangarei District have a range of options to ensure their income meets their immediate and changing needs

Comment

While not directly a local government responsibility, adequate and secure income in retirement is the major priority for older people because it impacts on every other aspect of their lives.

People over 65 years of age receive NZ Superannuation, a universal base benefit set at 65% of the average wage and linked to the Consumer Price Index²². Currently NZ Superannuation is set at \$619.46 net fortnightly for single and \$470 net fortnightly for a person who is married or in a de facto relationship.

Supplementary entitlements are also available from Work and Income New Zealand to mitigate accommodation costs, high use health and disability costs and special needs. These entitlements are eligibility (means) tested.

Work and Income provides a 'Super Centre' in Central Whangarei, as well as operating a weekly service at its office in Onerahi to meet the needs of older people in the area. Work and Income staff, also visit rest homes to ensure people are aware of their entitlements and to answer any questions.

With no compulsory retirement age and an ageing but healthier population with longer life expectancy, it is predicted that the trend for people to continue in employment past the age of 65 years will increase. Variables such as women's broken employment patterns, skills shortages, rising dependency ratios and, the level of superannuation and private retirement savings will also affect the extent to which people continue in work past the age of 65 years.

One significant issue for superannuitants is secondary tax. All superannuitants who earn income over their superannuation entitlement pay secondary tax – either on their income earned, or on their superannuation.

The current tax regime is complex; however the key issue is that it may reduce the incentive for skilled older people to continue working or receiving business income. At the same time, higher workforce participation by older people is needed to offset skills shortages and to maintain current levels of GDP, thus posing a 'Catch 22' for older people and the national economy.

Some people with assets can maintain a higher standard of living through the early establishment of family trusts, which both generate income and limit asset testing eligibility barriers for the purposes of receiving Residential Care Subsidies. While the Government has recently raised asset thresholds for this subsidy, the practice of 'depositing' assets in family trusts continues to be widespread, and the Government has made no moves to close this 'loophole' in its income tax policies.

The situations outlined above adversely affect the retirement of older people from lower socio-economic groups, Maori and Pacific peoples and women. Because people in these groups experience various structural disadvantages throughout their lives, they have less opportunity to accumulate assets and retirement savings.

They therefore have no reason to set up family trusts in which to 'hide' assets (like the family home).

In addition, the secondary tax issue may mean there is little value in them supplementing superannuation income by continuing to work after they turn 65 years.

Rather than relying on government to review superannuation levels and taxation policies relating to a superannuants secondary income, older people need to develop retirement plans, including preparation for an adequate retirement income, based on a projection of their lifestyle desires and likely future priorities.

²² Office of the Minister for Senior Citizens 22.8.05

Such plans can reduce the impact of major life changes in older age that often occur without warning, and significantly affecting their finances, health, housing and lifestyle. Council could help to promote income and retirement planning as part of its joint work with Government and community agencies.

Another issue which could impact on the ability of older people to maintain an appropriate income into older age is the number of 'baby boomers' likely to be selling their family homes over the same period of time (2016 to 2030), as they move to 'downsize' and capitalise assets.

If this situation eventuates, the ability of older people to realise the value of their assets or take advantage of accumulated equity caused by the current housing price increases may be undermined.

Income and financial resources also affect the ability of older people to remain in their own homes, especially if access modifications are required because of disability.²³ NDHB currently has a two year waiting list for subsidised home modifications.

As people grow older, they are likely to want to be close to health services and community facilities. They are also likely to require increasingly more support with housing related services, such as routine maintenance and chores (e.g. changing light-bulbs, doing lawns, fixing locks, changing tap washers, cleaning guttering). This is particularly the case for older women living on their own – the current majority of whom grew up before the era of 'girls can do anything'.

Age Concern's minor repairs and maintenance service - which saw the organisation develop a resource of retired people available to do odd jobs for a donation, as well as a list of professional tradespeople available for home maintenance - has in the past been delivered through a contract with the NDHB. Providing support for this very practical initiative is an excellent example of how Council can indirectly assist older people's income to meet their immediate and changing needs.

The franchise business, Grey Skills, has also developed a Whangarei based maintenance team of older tradespeople (40 plus) who specialise in delivering affordable and professional home maintenance services to older people.

There is likely to be a burgeoning demand for this type of service in the future, and there is potential for the current community-based services to be developed by older people (e.g. ex-trades people) into other small specialist businesses that supplement their superannuation income.

Some older people faced with trying to meet increasing rates demands – particularly in fast-developing coastal areas - can be either effectively forced out of their homes by financial constraints, or to engage in what can be termed as 'risk-taking behaviour' (e.g. economising on food or essential services, such as heating).²⁴ This is a particular issue for older Maori, who are less likely to be proactive in seeking assistance.

Proactive Council support such as parking subsidies, rates, income and senior citizens rebates²⁵ is likely to therefore become increasingly important to publicise.

Action

Although adequate and secure income is not a direct Council issue, there are a number of Council related activities that could be undertaken as part of its commitment to positive ageing.

For example, being proactive about informing older people of rates rebates and other forms of financial support, and working to improve older people's take-up of entitlements generally.

Council could reconsider its own rates remission policy that is based on financial hardship and also will need to take account of changes to the government's rates rebate scheme. This initiative, administered by the Department of Internal Affairs, provides low income homeowners with up to \$200.00 rebate on their rates, calculated on the amount of rates paid and the person's number of dependents.

Take-up of this scheme has dropped from 102,244 households in 1977 to 3,529 in 2004, but the Labour Government has budgeted to increase the rebate to \$500.00 and proposes to raise the income threshold for applications from \$7,400 to \$20,000. This could potentially extend the rebate to 300,000 ratepayers and will be brought in at 1 July 2006.²⁶ Council could disseminate information about the rebate scheme by attaching a note to people's rates demands.

²³ Accommodation options for Older People in New Zealand Center for Housing Research June 2004 pp22

²⁴ Lyn Rostern, Northland District Health Board

²⁵ Whangarei Maori Wardens

²⁶ NZ Labour Party policy

Council could consider mitigating the impact that uniform general (flat/fixed) charges on rates, including water rates, have on older people living on a fixed income.

Limiting user pays charges and developing consent and inspection rebates or discounts for older people building, renovating or modifying their own homes are other ways that Council can help older Whangarei people to maintain a standard of income which supports an acceptable standard of living.

Council could also, through its role as an advocate and a facilitator of strategic partnerships, encourage central Government to reduce the tax on income that superannuants earn, and ensure that the provision of essential services for older people (e.g. housing, transport, residential care) is sustainable and affordable at the District level.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can support older people living in the Whangarei District to have a range of options to ensure their income meets their immediate and changing needs, for example:

- Revisiting Council's Rates Remission Policy 10, particularly in relation to the government's planned rates rebate scheme changes
- Identifying other Council policies that particularly impact on people solely dependent on national superannuation
- Being proactive about providing information about Council rebates and other financial support available to older people

That Council consider ways in which its business operations practices can support older people living in the Whangarei District to have a range of options to ensure their income meets their immediate and changing needs, for example:

- Supporting the continuation and development of Age Concern's community based home maintenance service e.g. through subsidy funding and promotional material
- Lowering the cost of building permits and inspections for older people seeking to modify their homes for their future needs
- Allowing the 'super card' to be used to validate reduced entry prices to council facilities, events and activities are – e.g. pool, theatre, exhibitions

That Council consider ways in which its external practices can support older people living in the Whangarei District to have a range of options to ensure their income meets their immediate and changing needs, for example:

- Working with central Government, sector and community groups (including budget services) to provide information about retirement and encourage people to develop retirement and savings plans
- Supporting sector and community groups in any approach to Government regarding reviewing the level of national superannuation
- Supporting sector and community groups in any approach to Government regarding reviewing the impact of secondary tax on people receiving superannuation

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A District with growing business and employment opportunities

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

Elimination of ageism and promotion of flexible working options

Objective 6

Older people find the Whangarei District a great place to work

Comment

Ageism is a bias against a person based on age often leading to stereotyping and discrimination. Examples of ageism related to older people can be found in the media (where people are stereotyped according to age), and in the workplace (where people are considered 'too old' for a job, and youth is favoured over skill or experience).

An increase in the sheer size of the ageing population, and the financial and political power of baby boomers in particular is increasingly challenging the predominant view of older people as a 'spent force'.

A growing population of older Maori, Pacific and Asian peoples in New Zealand is also assisting in breaking down negative views of the ageing process and being old. These cultures are often more open than Pakeha society to holding older people in high esteem and valuing their knowledge, skills and experience.

While professional men are still the group most vulnerable to ageism in employment, particularly when they have lost a job or tried to re-enter the work force at their previous level of status and remuneration,²⁷ companies faced with a shrinking pool of unemployed are looking to retain older people in order to maintain an acceptable skill base in their workforce.

Employers are now being encouraged to take advantage of the knowledge and experience of New Zealand's older workers to help offset a serious national skills shortage predicted to last for some time.

Strategies that enable older people to continue in employment - for instance introducing flexibility into the workplace, offering retraining opportunities, phasing in retirement transitions, job sharing and part-time work are all part of the contemporary debate around workforce and skills issues. These are taking place within the broader context of countering ageism, making workplaces more accessible, and increasingly, a discussion about an acceptable work/life balance.

Action

Council is an EEO employer and as such can model good employer practices to local businesses by employing older people and valuing the skills and experience of older workers within its organisation.

Good employer practices could include the development of family-friendly and older person-friendly workplaces where people can be employed on a casual, part time and flexitime basis. Council could ensure that equal employment policies are implemented inclusively for its staff across all age groups, including recognition that Council staff in general may also value flexitime because of their responsibilities to older family members.

Council needs to identify the cohort of older people who want to continue to participate in the labour market and engage them in Council policy and planning processes related to services, transport and business development.

Economic development practices that utilise the skills of older people in such roles as business mentors will assist the District and enable it to be promoted as one that values the investment – both financial and non-financial - of older people.

Council could promote the employment of older people through, for example, instituting a Council-sponsored award that recognises businesses that employ older people or are elder friendly in their workplace practices.

²⁷ EEO Commission

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices ensure that older people find the District a great place to work, for example:

- Reviewing Council's EEO and family friendly policies to ensure that particular needs of older Council staff and an ageing workforce are being acknowledged

That Council consider ways in which its business operations ensure that older people find the District a great place to work, for example:

- Taking into account employment trends amongst older people (e.g. flexible hours, part time work) when reviewing other policies e.g. transport, parking facilities, safety, urban design and planning principles

That Council consider ways in which its external practices ensure that older people find the District a great place to work, for example:

- Formally and publicly acknowledging Whangarei businesses that engage in elder-friendly workplace practices
- Supporting industry groupings to meet the skill needs of older people e.g. recognition of prior experience, retraining, 'fast-track' options, cross-skilling
- Incorporating information into its promotional materials that highlights Council's interest in welcoming older people as valued contributors to the District's business and economic development

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A community that is healthy and educated

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

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

Objective 7

Older people living in the Whangarei District have the information and support needed to ensure a healthy lifestyle

Comment

The likelihood and severity of disability increases with age, with around 36% of all those aged over 75 years having a moderate disability and 18% having a severe disability (Census 2001).

Disabilities range from sensory (vision and hearing), to psychiatric, cognitive and mobility related.

While the issues for older Maori and non-Maori are similar, Maori are more likely to have obesity related disabilities and chronic diseases such as diabetes.

The most common cause of death for both women and men over 65 years is heart disease, with deaths from other disease (e.g. stroke, respiratory and cancers) increasing with age. Men are more likely to die from heart, respiratory disease and cancers than women, who are more likely to die from stroke than men.

Dementia predominantly affects those over 65 years and becomes more common with advancing age. Currently about 70% of people with dementia are cared for in their own homes.

In general older people themselves prefer if possible to stay in their own home (74% of people with disabilities aged 65-74 years old live in their own home),²⁸ but this may only be possible with additional in-home support, and does not always meet their security concerns or high level health needs.

The Ministry of Health has developed a health strategy, disability strategy and an older people's health strategy to support positive ageing and plan for the increase in numbers of older people who will require health and disability services, and from this Northland District Health Board (NDHB), has recently developed a five year strategic plan, 'Creating a Healthier Northland.'

The plan identifies:

- older people as one of the high need groups in Northland (along with Maori, Pacific, children and youth)
- chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease as the most debilitating
- encouragement of healthier lifestyles as a priority

Northland District Health Board (NDHB) plans to implement its strategy by encouraging a paradigm shift from care services which 'do for' people, to developing care programmes focussed on 'restorative services'-encouraging home-care programmes that support people to 'do for themselves'.

For example, the NDHB Strategy will encourage home-based carers providing cleaning, laundry and personal care services to a range of people (post-operative, disabled, and older people), and will support people to clean and care for themselves as a way of engaging in healthy activity and to encourage independence.

Primary Health Organisations have recently been developed in order to lower the cost of primary health services to consumers. Manaia Health, the only Primary Health Organisation in the District (but one of several Public Health Organisations), was developed in 2003. It has over 10,700 Whangarei people over 65 years of age enrolled (9,920 Pakeha, and 740 Maori).²⁹

Maori health organisations are funded by the NDHB or the Ministry of Health. Te Tai Tokerau MAPO Trust, established in 1996 as an expression of Treaty partnership and a response to the deficit in Maori health status, works in partnership with government funding organisation to effectively fund and monitor Te Tai

²⁸ Health, Ministry of, Health of Older People in New Zealand: A Statistical Reference, 2002. p.54

²⁹ Manaia Health PHO statistics. Chris Farelly. 8.05

Tokerau health and disability services. MAPO's aim is to facilitate Maori health improvement through Maori provider / workforce development and mainstream enhancement, and to this end MAPO participates in NDHB organisational, strategic and operational planning activities.

Council itself has an important role to play in maintaining and improving the health of the District through its provision of public health services including the provision of clean water, waste disposal and environmental services.

Council also has a role in encouraging older people to participate in healthy activities through the provision and promotion of open public spaces and maintenance of environments that encourage recreation and outdoor activity amongst older people.

Action

Implementation of Council's current Open Spaces Strategy and the extension of its work of developing small urban spaces which encourage older people to meet and engage in outdoor activity supports the NDHB's strategic plan 'Creating a Healthier Northland.'

Open spaces in the CBD that cater for children could be redesigned to become more older person friendly. For example, tables with built-in sitting places are not always accessible, walkways lack handrails and parks lack reliable shelter and shade. Midlifers - the next generation of older people - are particularly keen to ensure Council's work in this area encourages activity, participation and environmental protection.

There is a strong and current base of local community support on which Council can build activities that focus on older people. Council has a role in ensuring that the range of activities - and thus potential participants - is extended, and that groups keen to develop new ways of ensuring that older people remain healthy and educated, are supported and promoted.

Sport Northland, which is part-funded by Council, provides a range of health-focused programmes and initiatives for older people. Council could partner with this organisation, Northland Health, MAPO and other health providers in the development and support of health promotion, primary health and prevention services, including in rural areas through the use of Council owned facilities.

Council's Library Strategy provides and promotes the use of technology and the library's elder friendly programmes, such as talking books and mobile services. These services contribute to this aspect of older people's wellbeing by encouraging mental health and community engagement amongst older people. Mental wellness is as important a health service as any for older people, and staying involved in community educational and recreational activities is a vital feature of mental wellness.

While there are a number of ways such as these, at Council's disposal to develop and support community activities that promote the maintenance of healthy lifestyles and community participation, much of Council's involvement in creating a healthier District will be through partnership arrangements with agencies that are health-focused rather than through direct provision of health services.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can ensure that older people living in the District have the information and support needed to ensure a healthy lifestyle, for example:

- Implementing Council's walking and cycling strategies
- Reviewing the Open Spaces policy in the light of older people's priorities

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can ensure that older people living in the Whangarei District have the information and support needed to ensure a healthy lifestyle, for example:

- Promoting to older people the range of outdoor and recreational opportunities in the District, through well targeted information (including detailed maps, access advice, distance/estimated walking times)
- Ensuring that passive recreational opportunities are safe, accessible and elder friendly by developing parks, open spaces in urban areas, bush walks close to residential areas (with seating, shade and reliable shelter)

That Council consider ways in which its external practices can ensure that older people living in the Whangarei District have the information and support needed to ensure a healthy lifestyle, for example:

- Partnering with other organisations to promote healthy lifestyle choices for all age groups including older people, through activity expos, etc

- Working where appropriate with central Government, Northland Health and MAPO on health campaigns that particularly assist older Whangarei people e.g. diabetes, heart and obesity, aged care and dementia support services

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A community that is healthy and educated

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people

Objective 8

Older people living in the Whangarei District have access to 'healthy housing' options

Comment

The 2001 Census recorded that 91% of the total population over 65 years lived in private dwellings, with the proportion of people living in non-private dwellings increasing with age. In 2001, 31% of those over 85 years, the majority being women,

lived in non-private dwellings compared to 10% for the 65 to 85years group,

In the Whangarei District, while most older people own their own homes, a significant proportion (about 30%) do not. These people may live with family, in rental accommodation, or in residential care

Census statistics show very few non-Pakeha people are in residential care.³⁰ Older Maori often return to Northland to ancestral land after retiring from work in other cities (e.g. Auckland). This may mean that they move into old or derelict whanau-owned homes in rural areas that may be unsafe and/or present risks to their general health. It may also mean, if there is no house on their land, that they need to move in with their children, grandchildren or other relations, which in some instances could lead to overcrowding, a potential cause of health problems.

Some hapu in the District's rural areas provide housing for kaumatua and kuia situated within or adjacent to marae. Kaumatua flats and papakainga housing (where whanau live in intergenerational settlements e.g. at Pipiwai, are usually located on ancestral land close to marae and urupa, and offer older Maori culturally appropriate living situations where whanau support is available, and where spiritual and social connectedness can affirm the person.

Private rental is increasingly unaffordable to older people who are reliant on national superannuation. The current average weekly market rental for a two bedroom unit in the Whangarei District is between \$174 and \$230, depending on the location.³¹

Council owns 165 pensioner flats, built with the assistance of central Government funding. These are mainly located in urban areas and are currently managed by the Masonic Trust. Rents are charged at 22% (for bedsits) and 24% (for 2 bedroom units) of tenant's gross superannuation income, reviewed two yearly. The units are being gradually refurbished to meet accessibility guidelines and have an occupancy rate of 98%. Council has a current waiting list of 50 people who meet the criteria for these units.

Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) currently has 84 one bedroom and 401 two bedroom homes in Whangarei. HNZC income related rents are set at approximately 25% of net superannuation (adjusted depending on additional income). There are 35 people over 65 years of age on HNZC's current waiting list.³²

Whangarei has one Abbeyfield property which offers appropriately designed, shared accommodation for independent older people. Abbeyfield homes 'fill the gap between living alone and residential care'³³ by offering a living situation akin to 'flating' to a small number of independent people. Abbeyfield housing is based on older people receiving the support of community volunteers and the services of a live-in housekeeper who acts as a facilitator, and provides support and main meals to the residents.

The NDHB has an 'ageing in place' approach to providing for the needs of older people that aims to assist older people to stay mobile, independent and living in their own homes. It contracts for the delivery of various levels of home help support to 25% of all over 65 year olds in the region living privately.

³⁰ NZ Census 2001

³¹ Tenancy Services Website. 30.Sept 2005

³² Housing New Zealand Corporation Northern Assets Manager, 07 August 2005

³³ Abbeyfield Web-site

Based on Capital and Coast Health studies, the Northland District Health Board estimates that, with better management and restorative action, 60% of all rest home admissions could be preventable in the short term, allowing more people to 'age in place.'

The NDHB provides funding for over 1,100 residential care places (including private hospital and 61 dementia 'beds') across the region – catering to about 6% of the region's population of people over 65 years. The NDHB also contracts 18 retirement facilities in the Whangarei District to deliver residential care services to older people.

While the NDHB strategies are based on the concept of 'ageing in place', it also operates a safety net service through a 'managed bed' practice which allocates funding to retirement and residential care facilities for those older people who need this type of care. Funding is based on the regional population and capacity of the available facilities to provide care. Referrals to the 'managed bed' system are assessed based on individual need, taking account of available bed space and safety criteria.

Residential care and retirement village operators are increasingly seeking to develop 'staged' accommodation to meet the range of older people's needs as they age. Currently people in residential care, needing hospitalisation for any length of time, often have to leave the care facility where they may have lived for several years. Under the managed bed regime, if the rest home is unable to absorb the cost of this absence, the person's place is re-allocated.

The rest home industry has faced a downturn in profits over the last few years that has prompted several 'traditional' provider organisations to sell their facilities (e.g. Presbyterian Social Services, Salvation Army). Government spends over \$900 million per annum on subsidies to the industry, 34 but recent pay raises for registered nurses (including those working at residential care facilities) and claims for wage increases and working conditions from other staff have resulted in industry calls for marked increases in subsidies.

A recent New Zealand Nurses Organisation study shows that from November 2003, rest homes in New Zealand have been operating at half of the staffing levels recommended by the Ministry of Health.³⁵

Chronic low staffing levels, the lack of qualified staff and the limited numbers of people entering the caring profession impacts on older people in residential care. The current workforce is predominantly female, of mid years and part time.

It is critical for the wellbeing of older people that fundamental issues relating to staffing levels, training, working conditions and wages are resolved, as they impact on the quality of the current service received by older people and the ability of the industry to meet the needs of the larger populations of older people expected in the future.

While the trend is for traditional residential care to become the preserve of frail, very old older people, there is also a trend amongst some younger older people to move into low maintenance retirement units within secure complexes.

Retirement villages are mostly run as businesses accommodating independent retired people from the age of 55 years. They are often situated close to facilities, have recreation and social programmes and regularly offer units for sale (sold back to the village upon vacancy) for around \$58,000 to \$130,000 (current price range at September 2005).

While most retirement villages currently do not offer home care, hospital or dementia services, urban retirement villages complete with hospital and dementia facilities look likely to become a one-stop-shop care facility in the future. The trend is towards meeting the needs of older people by developing multi-purpose complexes which integrate independent living, residential care and hospital facilities to provide choice and seamless services as people become more dependent.

As life expectancy extends and 'baby boomers' age, the concept of living in retirement communities rather than rest-homes is growing in popularity, initiating a corresponding shift in philosophy on the part of providers and developers. Urban retirement clusters are being designed to meet the needs of baby boomers as customers or clients, rather than 'patients'.³⁶

Council needs to consider in the implementation of its Urban Growth Strategy and its planning, zoning and consents processes, that older people in the future will expect to have a choice of housing options to meet their individual needs. This will range across a continuum from remaining in 'family' homes through to the type of residential care available today, and will also include:

³⁴Parties offer more for aged care but bills huge' NZ Herald 8.9.05

³⁵ 'Aged suffer in staff crisis' Amanda Cameron NZ Herald 2.10.05

³⁶ 'From Rest homes to Retirement Communities', The Selwyn Scene, No 2, 2005, p 1

housing integrated into intergenerational situations, including granny flats and smaller homes in established communities

upmarket low maintenance residential developments in cul de sac and cluster housing, where older people live in separate homes alongside other older people

cluster developments on farmlet-sized blocks (modern 'communes')

sharing situations (e.g. Abbeyfield type accommodation)

gated communities

inner city apartments.

Action

Councils have historically been involved in the provision of housing for the elderly (pensioner housing) through generous central Government subsidies. The construction of pensioner units in Whangarei occurred through this assistance.

While no pensioner housing has been built in the District since the early 1990's, HNZA's Housing Innovations funding offers local authorities a way to build new units for older people and modernise older 'pensioner' units at minimum capital cost.

Councils are also able to partner with other non-profit and community organisations to develop, upgrade and manage the units.

The Kaipara District Council, for example, has recently accessed the Housing Innovations fund and partnered a community trust to modernise existing Council units at no cost to either party. The Far North District Council has researched the future need for older people's housing in order to inform the modernisation of existing units and decide on future provision.

While councils are engaged in an ongoing dialogue regarding their role in the provision of housing, the reality is that people want central and local government to be actively involved in meeting the housing needs of the older population of the future and in particular, to provide housing to those in need.

The growth in the proportion and numbers of older people, the inability of many older people to increase their incomes, a lack of retirement savings, a dearth of appropriate affordable housing, and people's increasing desire to 'age in place' – these warrant a leadership response from Council.

One important means is through Council's role in planning the patterns of District growth and its partnering with other organisations to play a role in housing provision, if not through direct provision of 'supported' (publicly provided/subsidised) housing.

Council can ensure that its urban growth strategies, planning, zoning and consents policies and processes are drafted and implemented in a manner sensitive to the varied social needs of older people. This will help to facilitate future development of older people's housing in a way that leads to well integrated, accessible, affordable and appropriate housing for older people.

Council planning can provide safeguards against the development of 'Sunset Valley' developments that can ghettoise older people and dislocate them from their relationships.

Current mid-lifers - the 'baby-boomers' - will expect a range of elder-friendly housing developments, well integrated into established communities, including the option of being able to live close to their families in 'granny flats' attached to the family home. Primarily older people and these groups want to live where they have established support networks and patterns of social interaction.

Council needs to identify partners with whom to work to access central government funding and limit the need for significant rates based funding support of housing. Council needs to seek community feedback about its future role to meet the housing needs of older people of today and of the future.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can assist older people living in the District to have access to 'healthy housing' options, for example:

Developing a rent policy for its pensioner housing that aligns with HNZA rent policies

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can assist older people living in the District to have access to 'healthy housing' options, for example:

Working with HNZC and community organisations to explore the provision of further government subsidies to provide quality affordable and appropriate supported housing for older people in need

Ensuring that a range of housing options for older people in Whangarei are taken into account in current zoning, planning and consents policies

That Council consider ways in which its external practices can assist older people living in the District to have access to 'healthy housing' options, for example:

- Facilitating and leading a Whangarei Housing Forum to map the housing needs of future older people in a way that will inform planning in the District
- Working with Northland Health and the Ministry of Social Development to increase subsidies to rest home/retirement village operators so that wages and conditions are appropriate and support quality care for older people
- Partnering community and government organisations to ensure people have information about and access to healthy housing initiatives (e.g. the Warm Housing Trust which Council currently supports, HNZC's Rural Housing Programme, Fire Service's Kotahitanga programme)

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A District with lots of community facilities and programmes for all ages

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

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

Objective 9

Older people living in the Whangarei District have access to community meeting places that cater to their needs

Comment

Council owns a number of community halls throughout the District and supports Community Trusts that own others. There are also many marae throughout the District managed by Marae Komiti.

Some of these facilities are used on a daily basis, providing community focal points for a range of activities. However a number of halls, owned by mainly rural community trusts and sited on Council owned land, and some rural marae, are rarely used. Sometimes this is due to their limited availability (e.g. marae being used primarily for tangi) or because the communities that halls used to serve are no longer there. Sometimes it is because the facilities are outdated and not well configured for the type of activities, programmes and services that are now required by local communities.

Growing the diversity of community activities held in community halls and Marae could enhance social networks in rural areas, assist older rural people to remain in their familiar communities, enable city based organisations to take their services to the people, decrease the need for rural, public and private transport options, and strengthen communities in terms of security, safety and self-sufficiency.

The community trusts and Marae Komiti managing these facilities could be strengthened with some targeted advice and assistance by Council. This could assist communities to develop their facilities into centres that meet the needs of the communities they are based in – including older people.

There has been significant growth in parts of Whangarei's hinterland (particularly towards the Tutukaka coast, and the Maungatapere area), and the proportion of older people in these areas has increased. Many of these people have consciously chosen to live there as part of their retirement lifestyle, and do not intend to 'move into town' for many years, if ever.

At some point Council will need to grapple with the issue of services for these communities. Beginning a process of revitalising traditional centres of community activity such as halls is a step towards coming to terms with the enhanced services that these communities will require - and demand - in the future.

Action

Council is currently considering the development of a Community Hall Strategy to help clarify its responsibilities and guide its future investment in these facilities. Council is also working to develop closer relationships with Maori.

Both these initiatives offer Council the opportunity to take some practical steps. Council officers in different divisions have a range of skills and expertise that could be usefully shared to improve the management and use of facilities such as community halls, in particular those rural facilities owned by community trusts and sited on leased Council land. Such support should also be offered to marae facilities managed by Marae Komiti, that function as the centre of many rural settlements.

Council could help prepare a set of suggestions or guidelines that rural halls and Marae Trustees might use to review and upgrade usage policies, hire charges, and legal requirements, and to address accessibility issues so that these facilities could maintain or regain their central role in rural community activity.

Council could then commit to community development work with rural communities aimed at encouraging activities around these traditional community focal points. Use of rural halls and marae for neighbourhood support committees, adult education, growers markets, recreational activities such as tai chi, line dancing, kapa haka, wananga, and other activities could assist them to become a venue of choice for older members of rural communities, as well as their younger counterparts.

Council could also consider initiating early discussions with government and other agencies about future joint venture approaches to services for growing rural communities, so that planned initiatives (e.g. of medical or

childcare centres, Heartlands services) and infrastructure developments can be developed through a multi-agency approach.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can enhance the use of community meeting places with regard to the particular needs of older people living in the District, for example:

- Undertaking a community facilities/halls stock-take that includes a needs analysis of the future requirements of communities outside the City boundary
- Developing and implementing a Community Hall strategy and work plans to begin a consultation process and develop ongoing relationships with hall trustees and committees
- Developing guidelines to assist hall trustee committees and Marae Komiti with management, fundraising, maintenance and upgrades
- Working with committees to identify the maintenance and development work required to make these facilities more accessible to older people

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can enhance the use of community meeting places with regard to the particular needs of older people living in the Whangarei District, for example:

- Encouraging the development of local community facilities with funding advice and expertise
- Encouraging hall management committees to explore new activities, especially those attractive to older people
- Approaching community halls and marae re venue possibilities for Council outreach (e.g. consultation meetings, older people's for a, Council-sponsored community activities)

That Council consider ways in which its external practices can enhance the use of community meeting places with regard to the particular needs of older people living in the District, for example:

- Encouraging organisations providing elder friendly recreational, social and educational activities to extend their services to rural communities by utilising hall and marae facilities
- Liaising with government and other agencies to consider and work towards the joint development of services to future communities in rural areas.

Positive Ageing Strategy

Whangarei District Council LTCCP Community Outcome:

A District with lots of community facilities and programmes for all ages

New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy Principle:

Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation

Objective 10

Older people living in the Whangarei District are encouraged to continue 'learning for life'

Comment

In many senses, the quality of a community's life can be measured by how it assists, nurtures and actively supports those of its members who are at the most vulnerable stage of life.

The sentiments behind the maxim 'it takes a whole village to raise a child' are also applicable to older people. It takes a whole community approach to provide for and support its older people.

As a society matures, expectations also change. In the 21st century older people take for granted - and expect certain things both material, and in terms of quality of life - that their predecessors never considered.

These changing needs, priorities and demands need to be factored into thinking about and planning for the community of the future.

Participation in the community is key to minimising the detrimental effects on older people of the isolation that can occur with ageing. Reduction in family contact with children moving from the area, friends and peers dying, reduced mobility, health issues and so on all affect older people's ability to remain socially 'connected.'

Action taken by a range of agencies as well as Council can help to address issues such as anxiety, loneliness and social isolation, and reduce the occurrence of the more serious degenerative difficulties such as depression, by helping older people to stay connected to and engaged with the wider community.

As with all people, older people benefit from activities that promote inclusiveness, build confidence and self-esteem, and provide the chance to learn new skills.

Lifelong learning opportunities are essential for every adult New Zealander. Learning is increasingly seen as an inherent part of living, valued in itself and for its own sake, something that happens throughout peoples' lives occurring in a range of different situations, both formally organised, and informal. Learning doesn't stop when you leave school, or leave the workforce.

While today's older people are less used to this notion of education, seeing it as the domain of 'school', increasing numbers of them are engaging in adult and community education (ACE) through groups such as SeniorNet and the University of the Third Age (U3A).

The 'adult approach' to ACE, enabling learners to make their own choices about where, what and how they learn, free from the pressure and competition associated with formal courses and qualifications, distinguishes it from the compulsory system.

For many older learners, initiatives such as SeniorNet may offer the first step to ongoing learning – and also, their first positive experience of 'learning'. SeniorNet is an organisation dedicated to providing older people with training in computer literacy. The organisation in Whangarei has a membership of up to 450 with some members being involved for 5 plus years, and others joining to meet a specific e-need.

The next generation of older people, the current 'baby boomers', will however be au fait with the concept and necessity of engagement in lifelong learning. They will expect to continue to be able to access the education, resources and technology they require to achieve educational and life goals, in a variety of locations, not solely in traditional educational venues.

Learning institutions and organisations will need to plan a range of services to meet the interests of the growing population of older people, who until recently, have remained largely outside the orbit of formal and community education. Libraries, for example, will need to be continually re-equipping to meet the needs of older people engaged in education and learning. They will need to provide access to up to date IT learning options, and high quality technical support for those older learners who are new to these options.

Initiatives such as the University of the Third Age (U3A), a movement which began in France in the 1970's, are now worldwide.

U3A is built on the philosophy that life is divided into three periods – childhood, rearing, and work and retirement. Retirement is seen as a time for listening, learning, understanding and tapping into the knowledge and experience of older people. This type of learner-owned-and-controlled learning will become increasingly popular as mid-lifers, who are more highly educated than their predecessors, move out of full time employment.

There are two U3A groups active in the Whangarei District. The first group, established in 1994, has a membership of 250 with a waiting list of 90 until the recent formation of a second group. U3A operates around small interest groups that meet at members homes with a local tutor and occasional visiting speakers. Topics range from mahjong and scrabble to maritime history, languages and geology. This activity helps older people to remain learners while maintaining and developing social networks and support systems.

Older people's learning can benefit greatly from the support and sponsorship of local government, learning institutions and community groups. For example, New Plymouth District Council's Positive Ageing Group has a partnership with the Western Institute of Technology to develop a Positive Ageing Centre of Excellence (PACE). This will conduct research into issues important to older people, and look at applying this learning to developments in the local context.

Action

There is potential for Council could develop its role as a sponsor, supporter and promoter of community initiatives that encourage older people to actively participate in more learning activities, whether they be educational, cultural, the creative arts, or sport, fitness and recreation.

Activities could include lifestyle expos, arts and cultural competitions, older people's business competition, walking groups, an older persons 'day', wananga, educational lectures and seminars, dance and special interest groups.

ACE initiatives, already an essential part of New Zealand's education system, will be demanded in a wide range of situations, both formal and informal. An important part of ACE is taking learning to the learner. Council could encourage programmes to be held in Council owned community halls throughout the District.

Council will need to ensure that libraries and other facilities are equipped to meet the needs of older people engaged in education and learning. It also has a role to play in partnering and supporting learning institutions and organisations to plan a range of services to meet the unique needs of older people in terms of access to quality tutoring, technology, systems, and relationships with younger people and other learners.

Council support for the development of the local U3A group could assist to extend the options open to older people for participation in formal and informal learning, and for them to be able to contribute in turn to the community as peer-support, researchers, facilitators and tutors.

Council could explore a partnership with Northland Polytechnic akin to the Taranaki model. This would provide Council and other organisations with important local research on our ageing population and its consequences for the District. The Polytechnic's social work, Maori studies and nursing programmes could all assist with – and benefit from – this work.

Recommendations

That Council consider ways in which its internal practices can ensure that older people living in Whangarei have increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation, for example:

- Running its current and future planned services through an 'older person's audit' or quality assurance process

That Council consider ways in which its business operations can ensure that older people living in Whangarei have increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation, for example:

- Implementing the Library strategy and instituting planning that ensures the library develops outreach and technical support services as required
- Ensuring that its Community Hall strategy includes the extension of facility use for older people's learning for life activities

That Council consider ways in which its external practices can ensure that older people living in Whangarei have increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation, for example:

- Partnering community groups in sponsoring, supporting and promoting lifelong learning and educational activities that meet the varied interests of older people (including wananga, lectures and seminars)
- Exploring the concept of a Northland Polytechnic/Council joint venture research project into trends and issues affecting older people to inform the District's future planning.

Final Comment

This document demonstrates that there are many activities already happening in the Whangarei District to meet the needs of the current older population, and that Council is already doing much to ensure that Whangarei District is a great place for older people to live, work and play.

While more can still be done in this regard, the major challenge is to prepare now for the increasing numbers of 'baby boomers' who as older people, will begin to make an impact on services and infrastructure within the next five to ten years

This strategy signals Council's willingness to work towards meeting the needs and improving the living standard of older people living in the District in the future.

Significant further achievements will be realised by Council initiating some key targeted actions within its own operations, as well as working to achieve the strategy's objectives with a range of partners in the central government, community and business sectors in the District.

With Council leadership and co-ordination, partners may be encouraged to review and amend their own policies and practices to better 'fit' older people - keeping their values, needs and their increasing consumer power at the forefront of their organisation's development plans.

The relationships and partnerships established along the way could provide Council with models for undertaking other work within different sectors of the community.

Council, in the development of this strategy and implementation of its objectives, will help secure for the District's older people a future in the 'ultimate living environment'.

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Appendix 1 Process

The work of developing a Whangarei District Council Positive Ageing Strategy was publicly tendered and contracted to local social research company, Venture Consulting in July 2005.

A key reference group was set up to provide information, feedback and direction. A project plan was developed identifying project milestones and project timeframes. A document framework was produced and a data base of key stakeholders developed for the consultation stages.

Approach

The project was divided into four phases:

Phase one involved

- the gathering of resource information including other models of positive ageing strategies, National, Regional and District demographics
- development of a key stakeholders database including aged sector organizations, health and community representatives
- meetings with key resource people and stakeholders to access information, views and feedback on issues for older people press releases informing the public of the project and published in the local newspapers
- placing a questionnaire on the WDC website 'Have your Say' for residents to access and complete.

Phase two involved

- drafting information and feedback from key resource people into a document which was accepted by the Reference Group
- sending the document to a range of key stakeholders, sector and community organisations for comment
- making the document available to the wider community on the WDC website

Phase three involved

- public consultation on the Draft Strategy providing further avenues for public comment and feedback. This was achieved through:
- advertised public meetings held in Hikurangi, Ruakaka, Whangarei and Otangarei Marae
- a focus group meeting of mid life people (under 65year olds)

Phase four involved

- feedback from these meetings incorporated into a final strategy document
- final meetings with Council's Community Development Division and the Positive Ageing Strategy Reference Group to gain their approval of the document
- presenting the completed strategy to Council

Appendix 2 Reviewing the Strategy

Once Council has approved the strategy, it will monitor the implementation of the Positive Ageing Strategy as it does with other strategies and plans. This will include integrating the Positive Ageing goals and actions into its strategic planning rounds.

Council's adoption of the strategy will also ensure that implementation of its goals and actions – the strategy's achievements - are reported to the Office of Senior Citizens to be included in the NZ Positive Ageing Strategy Annual Plan.

In keeping with the expected growth in the older population and their needs, and the rapid rate of other changes - including development of best practice guidelines over a range of disciplines – it is recommended that there be a comprehensive review of progress at the five year mark.

A review of the Positive Ageing Strategy in 2010 will allow Council to celebrate the positive ageing work it has achieved. The strategy will then be able to be strengthened and enhanced to effectively inform the next five years of implementation until 2015.

The role of the proposed Positive Ageing Advisory Group will be to work with Council to achieve the Positive Ageing Strategy's objectives.

This will ensure that the spirit of the strategy, which is focused on improving the quality of life for older people living in Whangarei District, is honoured.

Appendix 3 Positive Ageing Questionnaire

Published on Council's 'Have Your Say' website.

Positive Ageing Strategy Feedback Form

Please send your feedback:

Whangarei District Council's Positive Ageing Strategy Feedback
c/- Venture Consulting Ltd
P O Box 388
WHANGAREI

Email: suni@venturegroup.co.nz

To arrive no later than **5pm Friday 16 September 2005**

Purpose

The purpose of this feedback form is to provide a mechanism for collecting comments for the draft document: **Whangarei District Council's Positive Ageing Strategy.**

You are encouraged to use this form to provide feedback, but not to feel limited in any way from providing comments in addition to those requested.

Name of person making submission _____

Name of Organisation (if applicable) _____

Postal Address _____

Phone (day) _____ Phone (night) _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Other types of sending submissions

Fax 09 438 7632

Email suni@venturegroup.co.nz

Online <http://www.wdc.govt.nz/submissions/>

1 What do you think are the three most important issues for older people (those currently over 65 yrs) in Whangarei?

- _____
- _____
- _____

2 What do you think are the three most important issues for people in the 55-65 year age group in Whangarei?

- _____
- _____
- _____

3 What do you think are some characteristics of a District that encourages positive ageing?

4 What do you think Council can do to meet the current needs of older people?

Directly (e.g. footpaths, parking funding organisations who provide services to elderly people)

Indirectly (e.g. advocating to central government regarding services)

5 What do you think Council can do to meet the future needs of an ageing population?

Directly (e.g. planning, housing developments)

Indirectly (e.g. sponsoring joint projects, promoting specific initiatives)

6 Do you have any other comments on Council's Draft Positive Ageing Strategy?

Thank you for your input to Council's Draft Positive Ageing Strategy

Appendix 4 – Consultation feedback from mid-life group

Feedback on the Positive Ageing Strategy from the meeting of mid-life people (under 65 year olds), held on 26.9.05.

Positive Ageing Advisory Group

Council should develop a representative Positive Ageing Advisory Group to support the implementation of the Positive Ageing Strategy:

- The core group of individuals is needed, with a wider reference group to prevent 'capture' by sector and other organisations
- The advisory group needs to be widely advertised to be representative
- The group could be structured in a similar manner to the Disability Sector Reference Group (DSRG).

Other ideas

- Council could support other organisations to employ designated workers
- Council could develop (work/support others to develop), a resource database of volunteers
- Council, community and business groups could develop an awareness campaign promoted at different times during the life of the strategy to support wider community understanding of the ageing process, older people's needs and to encourage valuing older people
- Council and community groups could develop guidelines for mentoring programmes e.g. SAGE to support older people to give their time and keep them from being exploited

Mid life people want to be safe as they get older. They want

- to be able to participate without fear of crime or victimisation
- wide footpaths for mobility scooters
- adequate lighting at night
- clean, safe public toilet facilities
- safe, accessible open spaces with shelter and shade.

As people get older they have more time to participate in community life. In order to participate they need to have access to the community. Council needs to develop alternatives to current transport arrangements including:

- cycle ways
- rural transport
- night-time transport
- transport to beaches
- transport to events.

Mid life people caring for parents and older members of their families and whanau, have provided information about their experiences which frame their responses and what they see is important for themselves and others of their age group. They have seen that events which change an older person's life can happen really suddenly and that having co-ordinated information is really important. They would like to see Council:

- support the development of one point of access for information
- support services that 'wrap around' an individual and their whanau or family
- encourage people to plan for older age
- develop communal meeting places e.g. spaces in the heart of CBD and urban areas where older people can safely do tai chi, play petanque, checkers etc.
- develop the Town Basin area as a better area for walking, as a meeting place, sitting etc
- develop internet café spaces in libraries and Council facilities – keeping up to date with the use of technology is one way people can keep participating.

Mid life people do not want to live in 'old people's homes' or in today's residential care situations. When they get older they want to live in a range of situations including:

- in whanau or family settings where they can access whanau care
- in situations where their needs are met along a continuum - staged care
- in small communities where neighbourhood is strong and they are not reliant on outside agencies for support
- in 'flatting' situations e.g. Abbeyfield.

They would like to see Council:

- involved in providing housing options e.g. smaller, accessible homes using a variety of styles for people who need subsidised housing
- assisting people to modify their own homes to meet their needs
- planning for growth within the District, including that caused by migration of people from outside the District who retire to Northland.