

OLDER PERSONS' POLICY

WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

New Zealand's population is ageing. People aged 65 years and over currently make up 12 percent of the total population and that proportion is projected to rise to 18 percent by 2021. By mid-century it is estimated that older people will make up around 26 percent of all New Zealand residents¹. This trend is reflected in Wellington's population projections which include a significant growth in the proportion of the population aged over 65 from 8.5% in 2001 to 11.9% in 2021.

Other trends include

- the ethnic and social diversity of the older population increasing
- more older people will be better educated and may seek more work options at age 65
- with a smaller workforce population (aged 25-65) and economic growth there will be additional demands on the labour market and employers may increasingly seek to employ older people
- gradually increasing numbers of older people who have never owned their own homes
- the gender imbalance decreasing in future years². (At present women live longer than men, and make up the majority of the older population.)

In both research and government policy papers, older persons tend to be defined as those who are 65 and over. Many people who were consulted, and Maori in particular, articulated how much older people and kaumatua are valued in the community. They also indicated that they view older people and kaumatua in relation to stages of the life cycle, whanau leadership and the holistic life experiences that have contributed to that person's status, mana and wisdom rather than being on the basis a person being 65 years old. In addition, some distinctions are made between frail elderly and active older people on the basis of age. Those distinctions also tend to be arbitrary as age is not necessarily a determinant of frailty or level of activity.

OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

The Older Persons' Policy is underpinned by the Council's Social Strategy. It is part of implementation of that strategy and therefore contributes to the outcomes and objectives set in the Strategy. It has also been developed to closely align with the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy managed by the Ministry of Social Development. The policy should be read in conjunction with both of those documents.

¹ Older New Zealanders – 65 and beyond Statistics Department 2004

² *ibid*

The Social Strategy

The WCC Social Strategy has a focus on building strong communities and specifies outcomes concerned with developing potential, access to resources, cultural diversity, city decision making and participation.

The outcomes the Council wishes to achieve through the Social Strategy are:

- **Developing potential:** People are encouraged to develop their full potential as individuals and members of the community
- **Cultural diversity:** Wellington welcomes, values and celebrates a diversity of cultures
- **Participation:** People are encouraged to participate in community networks
- **Access to resources:** All residents are able to access community resources and public services
- **City decision-making:** People are encouraged to participate in the decision-making and development of their city.

A full list of the outcomes and objectives of the Social Strategy are in appendix 1 of this policy.

The Positive Ageing Strategy

The Government has responded to the anticipated increased number of older people by developing a Positive Ageing Strategy (2001) which affirms and supports the contribution of older people in society, and sets down ten goals, each with a set of actions that aim to improve opportunities for older people to participate in the community.

It was apparent from the consultation for this Policy that the Positive Ageing Strategy developed by the Ministry of Social Development was an effective framework to address the issues and priorities of Wellington's older people and rather than "re-inventing the wheel" that framework and its goals have been replicated for the policy.

The vision of the Positive Ageing Strategy is

"For a society where people can age positively, where older people are highly valued and where they are recognised as an integral part of families and communities. New Zealand will be a positive place in which to age when older people can say that they live in a society that values them, acknowledges their contributions and encourages their participation."

It has an overarching aim to improve opportunities for older people to participate in the community in the ways that they choose. As part of that

Strategy, a Positive Ageing Action Plan is developed each year and monitored by the Ministry of Social Development.

Central government is responsible for the implementation of the Positive Ageing Strategy and takes the lead in terms of meeting the goals of the Strategy. However territorial local authorities are encouraged to contribute to the Strategy, and it is proposed that the Wellington City Council contribute to the action plan by advising of its actions that support the Strategy and reporting back on achievements. This Policy articulates the contribution that the Wellington City Council can make to those goals while acknowledging the leadership role that central government agencies have. In many areas the Council's role is one of advocacy based on its close relationship to the community.

The Positive Ageing Strategy includes ten goals each with action points. The goals are concerned with income, health; housing; transport; ageing in place, cultural diversity; rural, attitudes; employment and opportunities. This policy contributes directly to all of these goals except for those concerned with rural and income.

This policy articulates how the Wellington City Council will contribute to those eight goals. Specifically the goals are:

1. Housing *Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people.*
2. Transport *Affordable and accessible transport options for older people.*
3. Opportunities and Information *Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation*
4. Health *Equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people*
5. Ageing in Place (safety) *Older people feel safe and secure and can "age in place"*
6. Attitudes *People of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people*
7. Cultural diversity *A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people*
8. Employment *Elimination of ageism and the promotion of flexible work options*

Implementation and Monitoring

Associated with the goals are actions for the Wellington City Council to implement the Older Persons' Policy. Provision has been made for a position within the Council to implement the policy.

This policy is premised on the basis of partnership with the community. Effective implementation requires strong relationships with representative groups such as Age Concern and Grey Power and also with the older community more generally.

Along with the actions associated with the goals, opportunities will be sought for discussions/forum on specific issues, encouraging the participation of older people, to finding solutions.

There are two key monitoring mechanisms:

- Monitoring through the Positive Ageing Strategy Action Plan whereby the Council's planned actions that support the Strategy are included in the annual action plan prepared by the Office for Senior Citizens. A report on progress is then prepared by that office on an annual basis.
- The business plan of the unit responsible for implementation of the policy. The plan will include performance indicators and measures.

HOUSING

Goals/ Objectives:

Affordable and appropriate housing options for older people. (Positive Ageing Strategy 2001)

To ensure that all residents have access to basic requirements of housing, health care and other services, including the natural environment. (WCC Social Strategy)

“Most older new Zealanders “age in place” so housing is critical to their well being. Older people in New Zealand have [at this stage] a high rate of home ownership, but there are limited options for those who want or need supported housing. As the older population increases in both size and diversity, an increasing range of housing options is required.”

The critical issue for older people is the cost of accommodation, including, rent, rates and maintenance. This theme was strong for both Maori and non-Maori.

There are two key mechanisms the Council uses to support affordable and appropriate housing options for older people – the provision of housing for those who have barriers to accessing housing and, for those in their own homes, the Rates Postponement Policy.

Currently 21% of the Council's housing stock is rented to people who are aged over 65. To meet the needs of an increasing number of older people it would seem that Council needs to ensure the social housing stock continues to be made available to older people at least at the current rate. However, the number of applications for Council housing from older people is decreasing so it is difficult to predict the future demand from older people. Criteria for Council housing eligibility will be kept under review to ensure Council housing is available to older people who face barriers to accessing housing.

The Rates Postponement Policy recognises that for some older people on fixed incomes, rates can be a barrier to ageing in place. The policy provides for rates to be postponed until the house changes ownership. Council staff actively support older people and their families in making applications for rates postponement. Consultation with older people suggested a low awareness of the policy. There was a sense that the criterion was difficult to meet, yet Council officers have approved the vast majority of applications they have received. In the future an increasing number of older people will mean more people being eligible for assistance through the Rates Postponement Policy. There must be a balance between supporting older people to age in place and managing the financial implications of an increasing number of people postponing rates.

It is anticipated that there will be a move away from rest homes. Two major providers have already signalled their intention to close rest homes and will use these facilities as resource centres for supported living for older people.

With such a development the Council can take a role in actively providing information and support.

Maori that were consulted with were keen for provision of village accommodation with a mix of kaumatua, matua and rangatahi. They also reported the need for inter-generational housing for extended families.

Actions: Council actively addresses the housing needs of an ageing population by:

1. Researching housing options for older people, and consider options to meet older people's housing needs to 2020, taking account of a perceived need for more inter-generational or village-based housing. This work can be carried out in the context of the Housing Asset Reconfiguration Strategy (HARS)
2. Working in partnership with Housing New Zealand, businesses and not for profit organisations, to establish community or other alternative housing options for older people with a view to applying for assistance from the Housing Innovation Fund, in 2005/06
3. Actively promoting "ageing in place" tactics so that older people can stay in their own homes: for example, care services and supporting the provision of accessible information on appropriate services that support ageing in place, for example, maintenance, cleaning and gardening
4. Regularly consulting with older people to keep abreast of housing issues and solutions for older people
5. Ensuring the criteria for eligibility for Council housing takes account of the demographic trend of an increasing population of older people
6. Continuing to provide and upgrade social housing units and taking account of older people's needs when allocating housing (access needs, safety and social satisfaction) to older people
7. Periodically reviewing the criteria for the rates postponement policy
8. Increasing the provision of information about the rates postponement policy.

TRANSPORT

Goals /Objectives

Affordable and accessible transport options for older people. (Positive Ageing Strategy 2001)

All residents are able to access community resources and public services. To enable all to function as full members of the community by maintaining access to community facilities and public services, including the natural environment.

People are encouraged to participate in community networks (Wellington City Council Social Strategy)

Transport is identified as a barrier to older people's participation and access to services and resources and the cost of transport can act as a barrier to accessing services(in particular health services).

The Wellington City Council can contribute to ensuring affordable and accessible transport for older people through its provision of parking, control of roads and advocacy to Greater Wellington and other transport providers for effective transport networks and services.

Up to 35% of people over 65 years report some disability and currently 80% of mobility parking cardholders are over 65 (2,800 of the 3,500 Wellington city residents with mobility cards). There is a need for an increased number of mobility car parks and for greater enforcement in relation to use of mobility car parks.

For older people to have ease of access, pedestrian crossings and lights need to be in safe places with adequate time allowed for crossing. The Council can use its community networks to promote community based transport options for older people and it also has an advocacy role in provision of public transport.

Actions: Council will support affordable and accessible transport by (Note: Actions 2.1.4 to 2.1.8 are currently underway as part of the Accessible Wellington work programme.)

- 2.1.1 Researching and reporting on options for community based transport and fare discounts and where appropriate advocacy of older people's interests to Greater Wellington
- 2.1.2 Promoting "giving a lift" amongst all community NGOs, including churches, social and recreational groups, and health support
- 2.1.3 Considering advocacy for colour-coded bus routes
- 2.1.4 Reviewing bus stops - their distance apart, closeness to key facilities/services, and seating/shelter and for improved bus driver training

- 2.1.5 Increasing the amount of time available for crossing at intersections
- 2.1.6 Enforcing mobility car parks; provide mobility parking cards to older people who have lost their drivers license or are no longer eligible to drive (encouraging friends/family to drive older people to facilities)
- 2.1.7 Auditing pedestrian access to key central city buildings
- 2.1.8 Ensuring road signage is clear throughout the city
- 2.1.9 Continuing to ensure all footpaths are safe: keep surfaces even and free of obstructions
- 2.1.10 Identifying places where handrails would make public places/ roads/ crossings safer; and install as appropriate
- 2.1.11 Encouraging the expansion of the provision of mobility scooters.

OPPORTUNITIES AND INFORMATION

Goals /Objectives

Increasing opportunities for personal growth and community participation (Positive Ageing Strategy (2001)

This part of the policy contributes to the following Wellington City Council Social Strategy outcomes and goals:

Developing potential: People are encouraged to develop their full potential as individuals and members of the community. To ensure a broad range of education and learning opportunities, especially for those whose access is limited.

Participation: People are encouraged to participate in community networks. To ensure that adequate recreation, leisure and learning opportunities exist for all members of the community, and encourage participation and “bringing people together” in a wide range of activities.

Access to Resources: To ensure that all members of the community have access to information and advocacy services

City decision-making: People are encouraged to participate in the decision-making and development of their city. To strengthen decision making processes by providing better opportunities for consultation and debate on major issues.

Information about opportunities was identified as a critical component to maximising the ability of older people to take advantage of opportunities and remain active. The Council can influence this goal by facilitating information provision about available services and resources. Marae and other cultural venues are an important focus for information dissemination. Where possible, published information affecting older people should also be promoted and discussed on radio, including iwi radio, and take account of cultural diversity. WCC has publishing standards for its own information and publications and those standards take account of the needs of different groups. An increasing number of older people use the internet and other electronic media to access information and maintain relationships. The council also facilitates the provision of interpretation services.

“Opportunities for personal growth and community participation may take many forms, including lifelong learning, physical activity and volunteering. There are many factors that influence whether an older person can participate in activities, including income and cost, health and disability, transport, living situation and attitudes.” (Positive ageing in New Zealand, 2001)

Actions: Council will ensure a two way flow of information between older people and the Council by:

- 3.1 Actively consulting with older people about their needs, priorities and barriers to accessing information and opportunities

- 3.2 Actively seeking the views of older people when developing policies
- 3.3 In partnership with government agencies, business and NGOs investigating options for a Centre for Older People which provides a one stop shop for information, with space for health providers and recreational facilities
- 3.4 Reporting on and implementing strategies to enhance information services in libraries and community centres, eg enhancing access to health services, job opportunities, keeping fit, recreation, discounts etc
- 3.5 Supporting older peoples access to and training on information and communication technologies
- 3.6 Taking account of the information needs of people caring for older people
- 3.7 Monitoring and advising on consultation carried out by the Council with older people.

HEALTH

Goals /Objectives

Equitable, timely, affordable and accessible health services for older people (Positive Ageing Strategy (2001)

To ensure that all residents have access to basic requirements of housing, health care and other services, including the natural environment

To enable all to function as full members of the community by maintaining access to community facilities and public services, including the natural environment

To ensure that all members of the community have access to information and advocacy services. (Wellington City Council Social Strategy)

A key role for the Council in supporting good health is its provision of recreation and leisure facilities. The Council's Recreation Strategy notes that

- The over 60's are not a homogenous group in terms of recreation need or ability. Consequently physical recreation and sport providers will need to match activities to the varying needs
- Interest in masters' sport will grow
- The commercial sector will recognise older people as a significant market and provide recreation for a fee for those that can afford it
- Providing for the physical recreation and sport needs of poorer older citizens will be a challenge.

Wellington's older people considered accessing health services to be a priority issue. The Council can facilitate the provision of information and act as an advocate for older people on health issues.

Actions: The Council will support access to health services by

- 4.1 **Encourage the exploration of options by agencies such as the Capital and Coast District Health Board and social service providers** to establish an Older People's Centre with space for professional services (including doctors, nurses, podiatrists and alternative health practices such as Rongoa Maori medicine and mirimiri – Maori massage); and a one stop shop for information, including information on health services.
- 4.2 Actively promoting opportunities for older people to keep fit by providing information about walking tracks/groups
- 4.3 Regularly consulting with older people to keep abreast of issues, taking on a coordination, facilitation role as required, and advocating with central government/ DHB to address older people's concerns
- 4.4 Working with NGOs to ensure older people are contacted and encouraged to participate in recreational activity

- 4.5 Acting as a role model for family-friendly work environment, meeting the needs of workers who are also taking/sharing responsibility for the care of elderly parents and for others who may be caring for whanau members
- 4.6 Ensuring the implementation of the Recreation Strategy takes account of the barriers facing older people, their needs and priorities.
- 4.7 Identify the priorities and issues facing frail elderly who are caring for sick older persons.

AGEING IN PLACE (SAFETY)

Goals /Objectives

Older people feel safe and secure and can “age in place” (Positive Ageing Strategy (2001)

Ageing in place is concerned with the provision of support and services that facilitate people living in the same place as they grow older. A critical issue for older people in deciding to stay or move is feeling safe. Facilitating support and services to contribute to ageing in place is traversed throughout this policy, so this section focuses on the safety aspect.

The Social Strategy notes that one of the key factors that influence the strength of communities is the safety of community members, including perceptions of safety.

Safety is a priority for Wellington City Council and there is an increasing emphasis on safety in the home and in the neighbourhood. Safety is concerned with both injury prevention and crime reduction and it is the perception of safety that influences the behaviour of a person. For many older people, the choice to age in place depends on whether they feel safe and secure at home and in their communities. Older people reported concerns with uneven footpaths, lighting and obstructions on footpaths.

Actions: Council promotes the safety of older people by

(Note Actions 5.5 and 5.6 are currently underway as part of the Accessible Wellington work programme)

- 5.1 Having a programme of review of street lighting in public places to ensure all public places including walkways are appropriately lit
- 5.2 Actively encouraging a greater sense of community and looking out for one's neighbour
- 5.3 Extending work with NGOs to ensure older people living alone are contacted on a regular basis
- 5.4 Ensuring Wellington Emergency Management Office has specific strategies for assisting older people

ATTITUDES

Goals /Objectives

People of all ages have positive attitudes to ageing and older people
(Positive Ageing Strategy (2001))

Wellington City Council's Social Strategy (2002) overarching theme is concerned with building strong communities. By definition this involves mutual respect and positive attitudes to other community members. The focus of the strategy is fostering social capital and community development which promotes respect and rights for all.

"Attitudes to older age and older people vary in New Zealand. On the one hand, older people are valued for their knowledge, wisdom and experience; on the other, their contributions are often invisible and their value to the community unrecognised... Ideas and attitudes about ageing and the role of older people differ across time and across generations." (Positive Ageing in New Zealand 2001)

Inter-generational images are important to link consciousness through the ages. Consultation with Maori emphasised the knowledge, wisdom and experience of kaumatua and kuia as being a valuable component of a strong community.

Actions: Wellington City show that they positively value older people by

- 6.1 Introducing an excellence award for services for and by older people
- 6.2 Ensuring that positive images of older people are part of the city's promotional material
- 6.3 Celebrating October 1st, International Day for Older People, by promotion of the older person in the community as an active, contributing person
- 6.4 Actively addressing the myths about older people, focusing on redirection rather than retirement.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Goals /Objectives

A range of culturally appropriate services allows choices for older people (Positive Ageing Strategy (2001)

Wellington City Council Social Strategy objectives include

- To promote a kaleidoscope of cultural celebrations which reflect the diverse cultural composition of the city
- To recognise and celebrate the distinctive identity of Wellington's culture, and acknowledge individual communities and their contribution to the cultural diversity of the city
- To cater for the needs of people from different cultures who have chosen to make Wellington their home.

The Government's strategy addresses the needs to increase the number of quality services provided by and for Maori; the number and quality of services provided by and for Pacific people; and identifying issues of specific concern to older people from ethnic communities, and developing options for addressing these.

Cultural diversity is valued by Wellington residents as contributing to sense of place. Older people have wisdom and experiences that enrich that diversity and have a vital role in passing on traditions and language. There is an eagerness for cultural performances and increased access to and opportunities for marae and cultural events.

Actions: Council promotes cultural diversity by

- 7.1 Promoting participation of all age groups within our cultural communities
- 7.2 Facilitating the interchange between groups to share and exchange cultural differences
- 7.3 Ensuring that when consulting with Maori, Pacific people and ethnic minorities in the city that older people are included and heard
- 7.4 Carrying out further consultation on the specific needs and priorities of older Maori, Pacific People and ethnic minorities
- 7.5 Investigating options to facilitate older people (particularly those from Maori, Pacific people and ethnic groups) to fulfil mentoring roles across a range of activities.

EMPLOYMENT

Goals /Objectives

Elimination of ageism and the promotion of flexible work options
(Positive Ageing Strategy (2001))

Developing potential: People are encouraged to develop their full potential as individuals and members of the community. To maximise employment opportunities for all members of the community.
(Wellington City Council Social Strategy)

Participation in employment by older workers brings social and financial benefits to society, to industry and business, and to older people themselves. In New Zealand, more older workers are indicating they want to work longer, either because they want to or feel they need to.

It is expected that more older people will be better educated and may seek more work options at age 65, concurrently it is expected that there will be a smaller workforce population (aged 25-65). Economic growth will mean there are additional demands on the labour market and employers may increasingly seek to employ older people. Therefore both employers and older people themselves are likely to demand more work opportunities for older people. The Council may have a role in provision of information to both employers and older people about work opportunities.

Actions: Council supports employment opportunities for older people by

- 8.1 Acting as a role model by providing flexible job opportunities for older people working in the Council
- 8.2 Promoting employment policies in the Wellington business community that recognise and acknowledge the value of older workers
- 8.3 Facilitating access to information about appropriate job opportunities for older people, for example, in the Library, at the Senior Centre, and the NGO databases, for example Age Concern
- 8.4 Actively promoting skills sharing/mentoring schemes using the skills of abilities of older people

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL STRATEGY

1. Developing Potential

People are encouraged to develop their full potential as individuals and members of the community

- 1a To maximise employment opportunities for all members of the community.
- 1b To ensure a broad range of education and learning opportunities, especially for those whose access is limited.

2. Cultural diversity

Wellington welcomes, values and celebrates a diversity of cultures

- 2a To promote a kaleidoscope of cultural celebrations which reflect the diverse cultural composition of the city.
- 2b To recognise and celebrate the distinctive identity of Wellington's culture, and acknowledge individual communities and their contribution to the cultural diversity of the city.
- 2c To cater for the needs of people from different cultures who have chosen to make Wellington their home.

3. Participation

People are encouraged to participate in community networks

- 3a To develop stronger community networks that include all members of the community.
- 3b To ensure that adequate recreation, leisure and learning opportunities exist for all members of the community, and encourage participation and "bringing people together" in a wide range of activities.

4. Access to resources

All residents are able to access community resources and public services

- 4a To ensure that all residents have access to basic requirements of housing, health care and other services, including the natural environment.
- 4b To enable all to function as full members of the community by maintaining access to community facilities and public services, including the natural environment.
- 4c To ensure that all members of the community have access to information and advocacy services.
- 4d To develop processes for local communities to allocate city resources to meet local needs.
- 4e To develop a range of venues that meet the needs of Wellington's youth.
- 4f To extend funding in areas focussing on assisting youth to make informed choices by funding successful programmes such as mentoring and life skills.

5. City decision-making

People are encouraged to participate in the decision-making and development of the city

- 5a To strengthen decision making processes by providing better opportunities for consultation and debate on major issues.
- 5b To work hard at reaching an agreed position, particularly on issues where there are major differences of view.
- 5c For appropriate issues, to lobby central government on behalf of Wellington's community.