



POLICY FOR THE OLDER PERSON

July 2004

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Introduction

Although most activities undertaken by council impact on residents, as a whole, there are a number of council activities that have a more significant effect on the older population. It is appropriate to bring these together to enable this segment of the community to have their interests represented in one document.

The Working Party members that developed the basis for the Policy for the Older Person were as follows:

Cr Christine McElwee	(co-chair)	Deputy Mayor
Aileen Buchanan	(co-chair)	Age Concern
Denise Lennox		Senior Citizens Assn
Colleen Crawford		Senior Citizens Assn
Tina Jakes		Community Manager, Mangakino
John Campbell		Service Centre Manager, Turangi
Tui Hill		Mangakino
Marilyn Collins		Community Services Manager
Carole Parker	(administration)	Community Development Officer

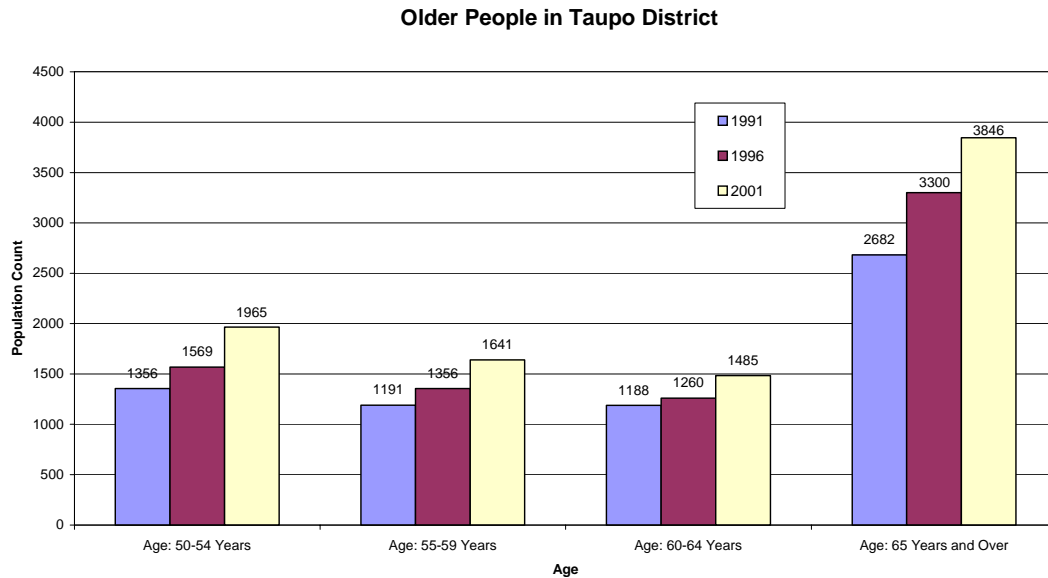
Preamble

Overall New Zealand has an ageing population. This is partly because of a decreasing birth rate and partly a result of increasing life expectancy. Almost half a million people were aged 65 years and over at the time of the 2001 Census, according to the latest figures from Statistic New Zealand. The number of people aged 65 years and over has more than doubled in the 50 years since the 1951 census. In the next 50 years it is projected that the number of people aged 65 years and over will more than double again.

In Taupo District, the number of older people is growing much more rapidly than the district population as a whole. Between the 1996 and 2001 census the number of people aged over 50 increased by just over 19% whereas the population as a whole grew by only 2.7%.

- At the 2001 Census 12.2 percent of people in the Taupo District were aged 65 years and over compared with 12.1 percent for all of New Zealand.
- This means that nearly 4,000 people in Taupo District were aged over 65 and 56 percent of these were woman.
- 4.1% of Maori people (360) in the Taupo District are aged 65 and over, compared with 3.4% for all Maori in New Zealand.

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With the growing numbers of older people in the Taupo District the Council and other organisations may need to change how and to what level they deliver services to older people.

Perceptions of Older Persons

The current generation of older persons is very different to those of the past. As well as a longer life expectancy, the population is healthier, more independent and active than previous generations.

Rather than being regarded as non-productive and a 'burden' older people should be recognised as full and contributing members of society. Many older people play a very significant role in their own families, friendship networks and local communities and may continue to be active, and at work for much longer than was the case in the past. Their contribution needs to be recognised and valued.

The Process

Council staff distributed more than 1100 questionnaires to people in the Taupo District as well as placing the questionnaire into local newspapers. One hundred and ninety eight questionnaires were completed and returned.

Three key areas for policy-making emerged from the analysis of the survey returns – Comfort and Safety, Community Life, and Communications. These areas form the basis of the Policy and Action Plan.

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Key Principles

In addition, Council has chosen to adopt the following key principles. These will influence every aspect of Council decision-making.

1. Older people have a right to independence, self determination and dignity
2. Older people are able to participate in all aspects of the community
3. Older people have the power to make decisions about issues affecting them
4. The skill and abilities of older people are a community resource
5. Older people are valued and respected

Outcomes to be achieved from the Policy for the Older Person

The Council's desired outcomes for this policy are firstly to promote a positive attitude to ageing and older people but also to enable older people to:

- Contribute to the decision making processes of local government
- Contribute and participate in the Taupo District lifestyle
- Have access to council services and resources.

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Summary of Responses to Questionnaire for Older Persons Policy

Using an advertisement in the local newspaper copies of the survey were delivered to every home in the district. In Mangakino a mail box drop was undertaken to all residents in the township. An additional 1,100 surveys with detailed information were sent out to community groups, agencies and individuals.

Copies of the survey were also available at Council Offices.

The surveys were distributed with little information about council's services in an attempt to get a fair picture of what the respondents believe Council should be involved in.

The feedback on the surveys clearly pointed out that many people in the community are unaware of the extent of the services that council provide.

In all 198 survey forms were completed and returned including one signed by 31 Atiamuri residents and two from other groups.

Presentations were made, by either the Co-chairpersons or Council staff, to community groups when requested.

Numbers of surveys received based on area.

Taupo	129
Turangi	25
Mangakino	14
Atiamuri	34
Wairakei	4
Kinloch	3

Respondents ethnicity

Of the respondents 18 [9%] choose not to state their ethnicity 82.8% stated European with 3.5 % recording New Zealander with 4.5% registering as Maori.

Major Issues Identified

A large number of very positive comments were received from people. These included statements like "provides excellent library, plants great gardens" and "pleasant town to live in – attractive gardens & traffic islands, green tables & seats on lakefront good"

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Others mentioned the staff "staff helpful" "the local manager is approachable and efficient" and "library service extremely good"

In all there were 49 positive statements with the key theme being the excellent library service, the care and high standard of the gardens, parks and reserves, and the excellent facilities that are provided.

The two issues that received the most comment were the requirement for safe access across major roads like the lakefront areas, Horomatangi and Ruapehu Street and the availability of a public transport service.

Close behind this came concerns about rising rates for those on a fixed income. Most older people are keen to retain their independence and this generally means remaining in their family home.

For many their homes are now in high rating areas and older people on fixed incomes have real concerns about meeting their rates payments.

Other concerns were issues of safety. Particularly the provision and maintenance of footpaths and access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters where there was a need to cross roads and there was no access from the footpath to the road.

Obstacles on footpaths and uneven or broken footpaths are a real concern. Even a small height variance in a footpath can cause a fall for an older person.

More disabled parking spaces for older people to easily access shops also seating around the CBD so that people could rest were identified as a priority for the respondents.

Obstacles on footpaths particularly things like skateboarders, bikers, tables/chairs, and overgrown trees that make it risky for older people who are less stable or easily fall were of concern.

Besides the general concerns there were some other issues that were raised by more than one respondent however were not high on the list of issues.

These ranged from a request for more pensioners housing to special pensioner rates at the AC Baths, a mobile library service, to assisting Turangi to get more Doctors.

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Council have already addressed many of the issues identified by respondents and it seems clear that many people were not aware of the extent of the work that Council undertakes.

Increasing councils profile in the community in a positive manner may reduce the issues of concern for people in the community particularly the older generation.

Review

This policy will be reviewed after the completion of the 2006 LTCCP. The LTCCP will be prepared using a new set of community outcomes prepared in 2005 and may well give some new direction for the Policy for the Older Person.

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Communication Matrix

Issue	Explanation	Action/Policy	Who will Implement?	Review Date
Consultation	Some older people feel that there needs to be more consultation by the council when decisions are being made, to ensure that older people are being heard and their needs being met. Older people also have difficulty understanding abbreviations in council documents, and often the print is too small for them to read clearly.	<p>Council will consult and negotiate with older people on policies, decisions and programmes that are likely to affect them.</p> <p>The communications strategy will have a section dealing with older people's issues.</p> <p>Increase the minimum font size used in council documents.</p> <p>Encourage the explanation of jargon used in documents.</p>	<p>All divisions</p> <p>Communications Officer</p> <p>All divisions</p>	Annually
Access to the council	Older people have trouble accessing the council due to location.	Advertising 0800, and council numbers, making older people aware that they don't always have to come into the council.	Communications Officer	Annually

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Issue	Explanation	Action/Policy	Who will Implement?	Review Date
The accessibility of health services	Many specialist health services are either provided out of the district, or by visiting specialists. There is a concern about the accessibility and continued availability of these services.	Advocate equity of access to public health services that meet the needs of the Taupo District including the availability of specialist services to isolated areas. Advocate the retention of a public hospital within the Taupo district that serves the needs of the community.	Strategic Development and Community Development Strategic Development and Community Development	On going On going
Provision of other services and support for older people	Taupo District Council is not the only organisation or government agency with an impact on older people's lives.	Council will advocate on behalf of older people to other agencies and organisations on issues which have major implications for the well-being of older people and their communities.	Appropriate staff depending on the issue.	Ongoing

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Community Life Matrix

Issue	Explanation	Action/Policy	Who will Implement?	Review Date
Access to Library Services	<p>Some older people have difficulty leaving their homes to access normal library services</p> <p>Public libraries should be available to all citizens as a source of recreational material for reading, listening and viewing, related to the people's interests whatever they are; and a source of material for people's life long education.</p>	<p>A comprehensive library service is delivered to all eligible District residents who are housebound and who have made a request for such a service, or who have had a request made on their behalf.</p>	Library	Annual
Access to Library services	<p>Some people in later life can experience difficulty with eyesight making it difficult to read standard print books.</p>	<p>A range of large print and audio books will continue to be provided through the libraries.</p>	Library	Annual
Collection of Refuse	<p>Some people have disabilities that make it difficult to lift and move refuse to the kerbside for collection.</p>	<p>Council approved door-side collection will be arranged for all eligible District residents living in kerbside collection areas who have made a request for this service, or who have had a request made on their behalf.</p> <p>A doctor's certificate indicating disability levels may be required as proof.</p>	Works Division	Annual

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Rate Postponement	<p>Many elderly people wish to continue living in their own home however in some instances they have a fixed income and genuinely find it difficult to meet rates payments. In some instances they may be going without essential heating and other comforts in order to pay their rates.</p>	<p>Rates postponement is available to ratepayers who are on a pension or 65 yrs of age or older and have owned a property in the Taupo District for at least 10 consecutive years and can show there is a genuine need for postponement of rates. Full details are available from council offices.</p>	Finance division	Annually

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Comfort and Safety Matrix

Issue	Explanation	Action/Policy	Who will Implement?	Review Date
Provision of footpaths	Some older people experience difficulty in walking on uneven or grassy areas particularly if they have to use walking frames or sticks or are in wheelchairs	<p>Council ensures new subdivisions are constructed with appropriate footpaths.</p> <p>In the older urban areas Council constructs new paths to the extent that annual allocated budgets allow.</p> <p>Work is prioritised on needs, pedestrian volumes, safety, providing links etc. Requests from disabled are a consideration.</p>	<p>Works Division</p> <p>Turangi Service Centre</p> <p>Mangakino Service Centre</p>	Annually
Uneven Footpaths	Uneven footpaths both in the central business and residential areas can often be a hazard for older people because of impaired sight and limited mobility. This can cause falls.	<p>Where it is identified there is a difference in levels between pathway joints greater than 10 mm for paths in commercial areas and 15 mm for residential areas on request council will inspect any reported faults and within one month repair those that fit the criteria.</p> <p>Every two years review all footpaths to identify faults that are a hazard to pedestrians and prioritise them for repair.</p>	<p>Works Division</p> <p>Turangi Service Centre</p> <p>Mangakino Service Centre</p>	Annually

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Issue	Explanation	Action/Policy	Who will Implement?	Review Date
<p>Access for mobility scooters and wheelchairs from footpath to road</p>	<p>An increasing number of people are using mobility scooters as a means of transport. In some places there is difficulty getting off the footpath to cross roads. Often people in wheelchairs experience the same problems.</p> <p>If pram crossings are non-existent or too steep it can place wheelchair and scooter users at risk of tipping over.</p>	<p>When new footpaths are built appropriate “pram crossings” are constructed to provide access from the footpath onto the road.</p> <p>When a problem with access is identified by the public, either with an existing crossing or the lack of one, Council will prioritise and rectify the problem.</p>	<p>Works Division</p> <p>Turangi Service Centre</p> <p>Mangakino Service Centre</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Provision of disabled parks in the central business areas.</p>	<p>Disabled parking provides for disabled persons to be able to load and exit from their vehicle at certain locations within the community. Certified disabled persons can park in any normal park for twice the period indicated.</p>	<p>Council liaises with various authorities to monitor needs on a regular basis. Requests and suggestions by agencies are considered.</p> <p>Where a justified need is determined Council will provide further disabled parks. Too many disabled parks can cause abuse and non-compliance.</p>	<p>Works Division</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Overgrown trees and shrubs, obscuring footpaths and on reserves.</p>	<p>Trees and shrubs obstructing footpaths often make it difficult for older people to use foot paths and on reserves some trees can cause shading of properties and block views.</p>	<p>Regularly maintain trees and shrubs on reserves.</p> <p>Where trees and shrubs are reported to obstruct pedestrians on footpaths Council will undertake to inspect and address the problems with the property owner to reduce the problem.</p>	<p>Community & Recreation</p> <p>Works Division</p> <p>Turangi Service Centre</p> <p>Mangakino Service Centre</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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Pedestrian safety on footpaths	Where young people use footpaths for skateboarding, roller-blading, riding bikes or parking bikes there is added danger for older people walking on footpaths. The elderly are often slow to react to these fast moving situations, this in turn can cause accidents or a sense of risk.	Regulate the Taupo District by-law regarding skateboarding / roller-blades/bikes. Install bicycle racks in the CBD for people to park their bikes in.	Compliance Officer Works division	Ongoing
Seats in Central Business and Residential Areas	Older people either for necessity or pleasure walk, however often they are not able to walk great distances without taking a break. Often lack of seating means they are not able to go where they wish.	Requests for seating will be investigated to identify the level of need and if it is viable and appropriate for seating to be placed in that position. If it is appropriate seating will be located where it will not obstruct pedestrian flows and create a hazard.	Community & Recreation and/or Works Division	Ongoing
Housing for the Elderly.	In some instances older people's circumstances are such that they require housing assistance or accommodation.	Provide and maintain affordable rental accommodation for the elderly and disabled. A feasibility study on the need for residential accommodation for older people living in Turangi is undertaken.	Community & Recreation Turangi Office	Ongoing 12 months time

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<p>Pedestrian Crossings over key roads in the central business district.</p>	<p>Older people often cannot move quickly, and/or have disabilities that make crossing busy roads dangerous and in some cases impossible. In some instances this means they are unable to get to where they wish to go because of the perceived risk. They have or cause accidents.</p>	<p>Periodically undertake a review of key crossing areas to identify if there is a need in some areas for initiatives that makes crossing for older people easier. Such initiatives could include physical central pedestrian refuges and painted medians. 'Zebra' pedestrian crossings can be hazardous for people and hence are not installed unless considerable and regular use is made of a crossing on a particularly busy road.</p>	<p>Works Division</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Safety is a specific concern for older people in the community.</p>	<p>Many older people are concerned about crime and their levels of safety. Because of age they often feel more vulnerable.</p>	<p>Needs assessment completed and project plan undertaken by the end of 2004</p> <p>Funding sought from CPU for projects.</p> <p>Work in partnership with Central Government and other agencies to reduce the rate of crime within the Taupo District.</p> <p>Graffiti and vandalism will be removed/repaired within 15 days.</p>	<p>Community development team in partnership with community groups and government agencies</p> <p>Parks Operation Staff</p>	<p>To be identified in the project plan</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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Transport	<p>Many older people who have a disability need to be able to access transport. Because Taupo does not have a public transport service Taxis are the alternative and are expensive for people on benefits.</p>	<p>Liaise with and provide a Total Mobility Service which provides special funding for older people with disabilities to access discounted taxis fares.</p>	Works Division	Annually
	<p>To retain their independence older people may need assistance to keep driving.</p>	<p>Council's Road Safety Co-ordinator will work in partnership with community groups to provide driver education programmes</p>	Works Division	Annually