

Tasman District Council

and

Nelson City Council

POSITIVE AGEING POLICY

Originator:

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Approved by:

Date:

Date by which a review should be carried out:

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BACKGROUND

The Nelson City and Tasman District Councils have been approached by the Positive Aging Forum to set out their respective policies for “older persons”.

The two Councils recognise the diversity of their populations and although most activities undertaken by the two Councils impact on residents as a whole, there are a number of Council activities which have a more significant effect on the older population. It is appropriate to bring these together to enable this segment of the population have their main interests represented in one document.

This policy is intended to clarify the existing services provided by both Councils and to provide some consistency. The policy raises a number of points that should be considered in the future although any additional services would probably need to go through each Council’s planning processes.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES

The Nelson City Council is currently developing a Community Development Policy. The Positive Aging Policy will sit beneath this overarching policy. Both Councils will also need to review the positive aging policy in line with the development of their Long-Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP) once the new Local Government Bill has been passed into law. The LTCCP will include the outcomes that the Councils have agreed to work towards with their communities.

In developing this policy the councils have also considered the National Positive Ageing Strategy and will review changes to Central Government initiatives as they develop.

OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED FROM THE POSITIVE AGING POLICY

The councils 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 Nelson and Tasman lifestyle; and
- have access to Council services and resources.

The councils recognise that they in turn have a role in delivering services, acting as facilitators, as well as advocates for the persons who are covered by this policy.

POPULATION STATISTICS

Overall New Zealand has an ageing population. This is partly because of a decreasing birth rate and partly as a result of increasing life expectancy. The average life expectancy of a person born now in New Zealand is 77 years. The Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman regions are slightly above this figure. Furthermore, once a person reaches 65 years of age they can expect to live on average an additional 17 years (mortality rates for younger people as a result of accidents and sickness reduce the overall life expectancy).

Females have a life expectancy approximately five years higher than males (women 80 years, males 75 years).

Although this policy does not cover a specific age group, it can be noted that there are approximately 11 000 persons aged 65 and over in the Nelson/Tasman regions. Nelson and Tasman have a slightly higher average age than the rest of New Zealand (37.2 and 34.8 respectively, compared to New Zealand at 34.8). However, this higher age is mainly a result of the smaller Maori and Pacific Island communities, which have a younger overall population, i.e. the average age for the Nelson/Tasman European population for New Zealand is close to the New Zealand average for this same group.

Currently people aged 65 plus make up 12.1 per cent of the population, this will rise to 18 per cent by 2021 and 26 per cent by 2050. The average age of New Zealand population by 2050 will be 45.

The needs of this population group differ from the overall population because, in general, they have a different set of characteristics, including:

- lower incomes (as a result of retirement);
- older people are more likely to live alone and more likely to own their own home;
- older people are more involved in arts and cultural activities. In 1999, Creative NZ found that 93 per cent of those over 60 had participated in the arts, predominantly as a hobby in the last year.

PERCEPTION OF OLDER PERSONS

The current generation of older people is very different to that of the past. Apart from a longer life expectancy, the population is healthier, more independent and active than previous generations. The policies and services provided for this age group therefore needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to match the requirements and activities that the population needs.

COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, CONSULTATION

ISSUES/BACKGROUND

The two councils need to ensure that their communication and consultation processes reach this group adequately. Overall, older persons are less likely to have access to the internet, but are more likely to be able to attend public meetings and respond in writing.

EXISTING STRATEGIES

Nelson and Tasman Council's provide a variety of ways in which senior citizens viewpoints can be heard and considered. These include:

- the opportunity to make submissions on various proposals such as Annual Plans and Community Facilities Plans etc;
- public meetings.

Councils help senior citizens to identify the resources, facilities, activities and events available to them via several publications and methods. These include:

- Council newsletters to all residents and ratepayers Newsline for Tasman, and Live Nelson for Nelson;
- the 'Mudcakes n Roses' news magazines for the 65 plus age group which includes all recreational programmes in the region as well as news stories. This is coordinated by both councils and distributed to seniors in the region, via a database and through public places;
- the Found Directory - a free directory sent to all residents, that has a comprehensive listing of all sports groups, art, craft organisations and community groups;
- the Regional Events Database - a comprehensive database of all events in the region;
- Councils facilitate a 'Nelson/Tasman Positive Ageing Forum'. This is a group of people who all work with/for seniors in our region and represent community groups, health groups and government agencies. This group comes together quarterly to develop strategies aimed to improve the lives of the elderly.

FUTURE ISSUES

Points for consideration are how the councils could improve the ways of communicating to and hearing from the older population:

- ensuring that public meetings are held in the communities where the residents live (as older persons are less likely to have access to their own vehicle);
- improving the technological communication skills of older persons by assisting with offering internet courses and computers at libraries.

RECREATION/SOCIAL/LEISURE

EXISTING STRATEGIES

Incomes for older persons are lower than those of the population overall and accordingly recreation services provided as a reasonable cost by the two councils are an important service. Currently the councils provide the following recreation services which are particularly important to the older population:

- libraries, reserves, parks and museums;
- a diverse range of recreation programmes for the positively aging through the 'Mudcakes n Roses' magazine. Programmes are offered in almost all towns in the region on a regular basis and the activities range from outings, walks, art and craft, adventure and educational activities. The aim is generally for the opportunity for seniors to socialise and make sustaining relationships with other people in their community;
- community halls as venues for meetings and events in smaller communities;
- grants through their grant rounds to groups working with senior citizens;
- organising and implementing events across the region such as Mudcakes Dance Parties, Opera in the Park, Jazz Festival, Summer and Arts Festival events;
- providing Walk Tasman and Nelson booklets which describe walks and provides maps for people to do in their own time;
- supporting organisations such as Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) with their objective to "create opportunities for all New Zealanders to be active and reach their potential in their chosen sports".

FUTURE ISSUES

- transport to get to recreation programme events (refer transport section);
- as the older age group increases, additional programmes and a more diverse range of programmes may be required;

- ensuring that activities are safe and programmes are professional.

TRANSPORT, MOBILITY

BACKGROUND

Older people generally have less access to private transportation as health issues can affect their ability to drive. When a person is required for health reasons to stop driving their own vehicle, this can impact on their self esteem and ability to meet with friends and partake in community activities. Transport is therefore an important part of the social wellbeing for residents.

When undertaking town planning, councils need to cater for those who are disabled or older by ensuring adequate footpaths, safe street crossings, public transport, seating and lighting.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

The councils currently deliver the following services:

- 'Safe with Age' courses on a regular basis via their Road Safety Coordinators;
- Nelson City Council subsidises the local public transport. Other private operators offer a transport system in the more rural areas of Tasman;
- 'Total Mobility' - a subsidised transport service for those who qualify as transport disadvantaged is also on offer through most of the region.

FUTURE ISSUES

Councils may also need to consider the needs for this group when they review their regional land transport strategies, and in particular:

- accessible and affordable transport across the region;
- with more families and middle aged women working (or leaving childbearing later), there may not be the same number of volunteers to assist with transporting the elderly. This may increase the demand for such services as the Total Mobility service;
- bus shelters;
- footpaths, cycle-ways, crossings, lights, street furniture and general planning, implementing user friendly systems for disabled and elderly and appropriate location of toilet facilities;

- support for volunteer agencies to assist with transporting the elderly;
- more 'Safe with Age' courses across the whole district.

HOUSING

ISSUES

Older people's housing needs differ from others in the community. These needs generally include smaller units or houses that are easy to maintain and have easy access, good lighting, are warm, and are safe and secure. Although the private rental market and private home ownership are a major source of housing for older people in the region, often suitable housing is not readily available in the rental market. Both councils provide housing services which have been developed over a number of years.

CURRENT SITUATION

Nelson City Council currently owns 142 community-housing units situated at nine locations around the city, and the Tasman District Council owns 97 at eight locations. The council's primary focus is on the provision for older persons, particularly those with limited financial means. The councils also support the Abbeyfield New Zealand in their provision of housing.

More detailed information on Council housing can be gained from each council's Community Housing Policies.

FUTURE ISSUES

- the new Local Government Act has classified Council owned community housing as a "strategic" asset and any significant changes to the level of housing provided will require extensive public consultation;
- as the population of the older grows there may be increased demand for Council housing services. The Councils are also aware that the needs of their residents vary depending on age and health.

SAFETY

Issues

Older people must be able to feel safe in the community. They need to feel safe walking in public spaces, such as the local shopping precincts, busy carparks or crossing the road. They also need to feel safe in their own homes.

This can be addressed through safety awareness programmes that educate and support older people to helping to create a safer environment for themselves. These may include how to cope with acts of crime in the home or an awareness of civil defence emergency procedures.

When providing and designing services and facilities, the councils also consider the importance of safety and can address these through:

- good lighting in popular walking routes used by the older person to increase visibility and discourage violent confrontations;
- an effective dog bylaw that controls aggressive dogs;
- an enforced bylaw for skateboarding in pedestrian areas and the provision of alternative venues for these activities away from older people;
- to continue working with the NZ Police, the Safer Community Council and other organisations to aim at reducing crime and increasing the feeling and the reality that the community is safe for older persons.

CURRENT SITUATION

As noted above, safety is an important issue for older people and it follows that if older people do not feel safe in their homes they will not feel safe in their wider community. The region as a whole however, does not suffer from very high incidents of attack on older people.

HEALTH

The trend is for people to live longer and to remain fitter and more active. However as the population of older people increases, so will the health demands on the community (particularly for ages 85 and above).

Although the councils are not directly involved in delivering health services (which is the responsibility of the Nelson/Marlborough Health Board), many activities that the councils undertake directly affect the health of the population, including transport safety, air pollution, water quality and recreation services. Accordingly, it is important for the councils to maintain a close working relationship with the Health Board and other agencies delivering health services. Councils also have an important role in acting as advocate for health services.

WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

The challenges facing older persons in finding work if they lose their jobs can be considerable, even though their skill level may be high.

The councils can consider assistance through up-skilling and mentoring programmes, support of computer training programmes and development of the economic base of the regions through their Regional Economic Strategy.

Older persons also provide an important role in the community through their volunteer work, which may lead into employment opportunities. The councils also have a role in advocacy through to Central Government.

ETHNIC DIVERSITY

As part of this policy, the councils recognise that different ethnic groups have different values and needs for their older population. For many minority groups the number of older persons is small and this increases their importance as a source of history to their communities. The Kaumatua of local iwi and Maori as well as the Ethnic Council should be approached for assistance in determining needs of specific population groups. .