



31 May 2019

S19.12

## **Submission to the Ministry of Social Development on the Draft Strategy on Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034**

### **Introduction**

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wāhine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000, with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand, and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Social Issues Standing Committee after consultation with the membership of NCWNZ.
- 0.2. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Strategy Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 (the Draft Strategy) and congratulates the Government on its initiative in this regard. We believe that this is a major issue for all New Zealanders with particular significance for women. Our submission makes some observations on the five guiding principles and then addresses the five key areas identified in the Draft Strategy.

### **1. The five guiding principles**

- 1.1. The Draft Strategy identifies five guiding principles: Valuing people as they age; Keeping people safe; Recognizing diversity and that everyone is unique; Taking a whole-of-life and whānau-centred approach to ageing; and Taking collective responsibility to plan and act for later life.
- 1.2. NCWNZ believes that the strategy is good and reflects all of the key principle areas. We are pleased with its broad scope, allowing it to include many specifics. These principles are general but it is also important to add details to the areas that need action. It will be good to see the principle of enabling all older people to be active participants in the community that they live in. The principles generally reflect most of the key areas, but we believe that there are some missing areas such as:
  - Ensuring intergenerational communication and support.

- Improving digital skills and knowledge: We support digital inclusion as a part of enhancing social connection and participation and we believe that it should be a guiding principle on its own. As digitization is increasing day by day, we need to encourage innovation for technological solutions to help older people.
- Continuing the Advanced Care Plan: As the number of older people is increasing, there is a need to continue implementation of the Advanced Care Planning Strategy. We strongly support that this should be part of the guiding principles.

1.3. In this context, NCWNZ wishes to draw attention to the extensive research conducted by Massey University's *Longitudinal Study of Aging*.<sup>1</sup> This follows people's lives in terms of work, background, beliefs, activities, housing, financial security, health, need for support and community involvement. The research is ongoing and results are published on a regular basis.

## 2. The identified five key areas for action

### *Preparing for financial and economic security*

*Possible initial priorities: Encouraging employment of those aged 50+; The State Sector to role model good practice in the employment and support of an ageing workforce; Identify opportunities to further enhance SuperGold Card.*

2.1. NCWNZ suggestions include:

- Introduce a budget service particularly for the retired group in the community so that experienced advisors are able to assist this sector in how to maximize their resources – financial and material to their best benefit.
- Stop the tax on employer contributions to KiwiSaver. Over 65s need to have the choice to be employed or not.
- Implement the 'Upgrade and Enhancement of Super Gold Card Proposal'. NCWNZ fully supports this proposal.
- Provide oversight and monitoring of enduring powers of attorney. There is a need for legal responsibilities implemented at national level to protect vulnerable citizens. Legal aid has to be part of this.
- State Sector and Local Councils should role model good practice in the employment and support of an ageing workforce: The State Sector has rules in place for good practice in employment and should be role modelling this. NCWNZ also supports the Living Wage is another way to achieve financial Raise awareness of sources of retirement income which includes lump sum from KiwiSaver. It is important to be aware of the long-term implications of any financial arrangements they share with their whanau.

---

1

[https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Humanities%20and%20Social%20Sciences/Psychology/HART/publications/NZLSA\\_%20Research-Summary\\_2014.pdf?234C87488161797F7A0665730159566E](https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/College%20of%20Humanities%20and%20Social%20Sciences/Psychology/HART/publications/NZLSA_%20Research-Summary_2014.pdf?234C87488161797F7A0665730159566E)

### ***Providing housing choices and options so people can age in the community***

*Possible initial priorities: Reform the Residential Tenancies Act 1986; Increase supply of public housing; Strengthen Housing NZ focus on tenants' need; Reduce homelessness; Identify and progress opportunities to improve housing options for older people.*

2.2. Homelessness creates anxiety and loneliness among people. To combat homelessness NCWNZ members made a number of suggestions that include:

- Increase options such as shared accommodation e.g. Abbeyfield, Co-housing as in the Urban Cohousing Otepoti Project should be provided to our ageing people.
- Investigate and implement international practice for building communities for residents with dementia and recommendation to develop communities with mix of aged and young.
- Reform the Residential Tenancies act 1986 which will also help to combat housing shortage.
- Provide quick housing e.g. containers as another option.
- Consider the provision of bridging loans. There should be a scheme, a pot of money for bridging finance.

### ***Improving access to health and social services***

*Possible initial priorities: Combat elder abuse. Improve digital skills and inclusion; Encourage positive attitudes to older people and raise awareness of age discrimination; Improve access and coordinate assistance to socially isolated and other vulnerable people.*

- 2.3. The Draft Strategy does not mention oral health. This is costly and evidence indicates that many older people have neglected teeth and therefore are unable to eat properly or comfortably. This could also connect to improvements to Super Gold card with greater discounts offered and encouraging more dentists to participate. Hospital Boards could also receive more funding for older people's dental care and as was suggested at the Nelson consultation the school dental buses could be used by Dentists in school holidays and weekends for treatment at a good rate.
- 2.4. For people to be able to age successfully in a community they need to have access to basic infrastructure such as a bank, post office, medical services, library etc. Often these needs are not in a convenient, easily accessible area where the elderly are able to congregate.
- 2.5. NCWNZ members' suggestions include:
- Improve access by ensuring that footpaths are repaired so that those on walkers and wheel chairs have a smooth surface.
  - Address the cost of hearing aids, mental health, prescription costs and the cost and provision of second Cataract operations etc.

- Continue 'Meals on Wheels' so that elderly property owners get one balanced meal each day to enjoy a better quality of life.
- Make it easier to report elder abuse and provide support. We also believe that it is necessary to look at constant and ongoing publicity about this.
- Encourage positive attitudes to older people and raise awareness of age discrimination.

### ***Enhancing opportunities for social connection and participation***

*Possible initial priorities: Encourage local authorities to plan for and take action to respond to an ageing population.*

- 2.6. NCWNZ agrees that social media, local community and government are able to enhance opportunities for social connection and participation. Social connection is important not only for their mental health but for their physical well-being. We support priorities such as:
- Drop in hubs for elderly close to bus routes.
  - Community based activities which promote wellbeing for a wider population. Local councils should have age friendly plan like Hamilton City Council has: <https://www.hamilton.govt.nz/our-city/community-development/Pages/Hamilton-Age-Friendly-Plan---2018-2021.aspx>
  - Consideration being given to encourage university and college students to board with elderly living alone – they will then get a better understanding of each other as well as increase the finances of the elderly.
  - Supporting initiatives to improve digital skills and inclusion and believe it is very important for local or national government to act quickly and work together to provide help here. We envisage this will reduce as generations move through.
  - Local councils supporting more cultural activities including different cultures. In order to include and bring all of the cultures together, we also suggest the appointment of a 'Cultural Facilitator' at the local councils.
  - The ongoing support of healthy lifestyles and access to programmes will enhance the independence of the elderly, especially if they are becoming frail.
  - The Community Education model should be reintroduced as we believe it has the potential for social connection and participation.
  - Consideration of the UK strategy to combat social isolation, which includes a Government Minister for Loneliness.
- 2.7. We also suggest looking at Papakaianga Housing that is happening at the Waiohiki Marae in Taradale, in Hawke's Bay. Here one person will stay at home to make sure that the elderly living alone are included in the community and cared for socially.

### ***Providing accessible built environments so people can participate in their community***

*Possible initial priorities: Encourage local authorities to plan for and take action to respond to an ageing population; Continue to encourage the development of the Age-friendly Cities and Communities programme.*

- 2.8. NCWNZ believe this is already happening in many local authorities but in some regions the policies and attitudes need to be challenged. The aim needs to be an age-friendly community for all ages not as a strategy for 'older' residents. We support encouraging local authorities to play a major role in this area, but emphasise that 'making the future better for New Zealanders as we age' is not only the responsibility of the local governments, central government has to play its part.
- 2.9. In order to make age friendly cities we suggest:
- Considering other options for transport – for example increasing the number of kneeling buses.
  - The better care of infrastructure to minimize the risk of falls for the elderly.
  - Including experienced elderly on the local boards by incorporating some of the findings of the well-being research.
  - Ensuring complete and integrated environments with accessible key services e.g. banking and postal services. They should all comply with accessibility codes. Care and thought are required when planning the location of services/facilities including access to education and the promotion of lifelong learning.
  - Encouraging local authorities to plan for and take action to respond to an ageing population: Age friendly seats, lifts, slip free surfaces in buildings, Parking buildings, facility for mobility scooters. We also need to include ethnicity/cultural challenges with the ageing population.
  - Appointing an 'Elder's coordinator' to bring elderly together and help eradicate loneliness.
  - Extend the concept of 'Green Prescription' to include all ageing people 65+.

### ***3. Other action needed in areas that particularly affect women***

- 3.1. NCWNZ believes that more serious consideration should be given to the fact that women will outnumber men in the aged population. The Relationship Act needs to be changed to protect women's property ownership with the start of a new relationship. Women do a lot of caring and often do not advocate or care for themselves. Older people who form new relationships should be encouraged to make "pre-nuptial agreements" well before they reach the three-year point.
- 3.2. Wages for rest home workers have deservedly increased. This has a follow-on effect to the service that is provided in the rest home, as they are more likely to hire fewer staff. This affects both the

workers who are mostly female and the female clients. NCWNZ believes that there should be a ratio of the number of elderly vs carers, just like the kindergarten, teacher vs children ratio.

- 3.3. We support rest home nurses being paid the same rate of pay as their hospital counterparts. A number of our members noted that the government has opened the doors again to overseas nurses and that this has been applauded by the owners of private rest homes. Some of our members believe that these nurses use rest homes as a stepping-stone into hospital jobs and do not stay long in rest homes. Their view is that there should be a minimum number of years that nurses have to work in the rest homes before they can take a job in the hospitals.
- 3.4. NCWNZ believes that there needs to be acknowledgement and support for grandparents who are bringing up their grandchildren. This is a huge task, and it is often women who are left to do this alone. They need full state support.
- 3.5. We would like to emphasis in term of raising awareness about women's health that there needs to be a better understanding of what wellness is for the ageing women and that it is not a lesser version of male aging. Aging women need to know how to be well and active to support their bone mass and muscle mass particularly after menopause. Too many women die as the result of falls. This concern also applies to Alzheimer's as so many more women than men are diagnosed.

#### 4. Conclusion

- 4.1. NCWNZ welcomes the Draft Strategy as a major step forward in ensuring a better later life and agrees with its general direction. We have identified a number of areas in which we believe it can be improved. These include areas in which particular areas of concern for women have been identified.



Pip Jamieson  
NCWNZ Board



Venus Sood-Guy  
Social Issues Committee