



Te Tari Kaumātua
Office for Seniors

He Tūāpapa ki te Ora – Infrastructure for a better future

Response from the Office for Seniors

Please find a response to He Tūāpapa ki te Ora, Infrastructure for a better future from the Office for Seniors following. We have made some general comments to help inform the strategy's development. Infrastructure has a significant role to play in supporting our growing older population to continue participating in and contributing to our communities. We would welcome an opportunity to engage directly with the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission to provide further input and feedback about responding to and preparing for demographic change over the next 50 years.

The Minister for Seniors launched the [Better Later Life He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 strategy](#) (BLL) in November 2019. BLL provides a good overview about the impacts and opportunities of an ageing population, including for infrastructure such as housing, transport digital inclusion, social and health services.

The Office for Seniors has also been working with the Ministry for the Environment and Ministry of Housing and Urban Development around the development and implementation of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD). We have worked with stakeholders to develop guidance for local councils, urban planners and developers about how to make our urban places inclusive and accessible to older people. This resource aims to enable implementation of the NPS-UD and is due to be published soon.

Question 1. What are your views on the proposed 2050 infrastructure vision for NZ?

'Infrastructure lays the foundation for the people, places and businesses of Aotearoa New Zealand to thrive for generations'

Include 'all' – for all of the people, places etc. to better reflect the intent of the strategy to deliver equitable outcomes for all New Zealanders

Question 2. What are your views on the decision making outcomes and principles chosen? Are there others that should be included?

Outcomes

Agree that efficient, equitable and affordable are important outcomes

Effectiveness should also be made explicit and included as an outcome, especially if 'oranga tangata' is at the forefront of this work. Efficient, equitable and affordable systems are not always effective.

There is also an opportunity to re-frame these outcomes so that they are more person/environment centered.

Decision making principles

Agree with decision making principles in general.

If 'oranga tangata' is at the forefront of this work, then one of the decision making principles should explicitly link to the wellbeing of all New Zealanders (and consider the equity impacts/ for health and wellbeing outcomes for different groups eg, Māori, ethnic Communities, older people, disabled people etc).

Question 3. Are there any other infrastructure issues, challenges or opportunities that we should consider?

Demographic change

There are an increasing number and diversity of older people across New Zealand. New Zealand's population is ageing both structurally and numerically. Population ageing varies across the country but even locations with structurally younger populations, such as Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington, are home to an increasing number of older people. It is important to consider both the number and proportion of older people living in a district.

Sound infrastructure investment can help to create opportunities and harness the benefits of an ageing population. When well planned, infrastructure systems have the ability to enable older people to continue contributing and participating economically and socially as they age. This is good for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their whānau and our communities. It will reduce pressure on our health and social services.

Supporting older people to age in place

With the strategy's focus on wellbeing, and to help respond to and prepare for an ageing population, the needs of older people must be considered when planning for and making decisions about future infrastructure investment.

Most older people do not live in retirement villages or aged residential care. Currently, only 5% of people aged 65+ in New Zealand live in retirement villages. It is important that our housing and other urban infrastructure provides affordable options for people of all ages where they feel safe and connected and can continue to participate in our communities.

The preference for most older people is to 'age in place' in their own residence close to family, friends and other social networks. Not only does housing stock need to be universally accessible and provide options for different living preferences, the infrastructure of the urban environment in which housing is located also needs to be accessible and inclusive.

Providing accessible housing options in inclusive urban environments supports the wellbeing of older people as well as other community members. It encourages intergenerational and social connection and enables access to employment as well as to services and recreational opportunities for older people.

We also need to think about how infrastructure will support the workforce that will enable older people to remain in their own homes. This includes both paid, unpaid and family/whānau carers. For example, transport systems need to be reliable, safe and available throughout the day and make it easy to get to a variety of destinations.

The World Health Organization's [Global Age friendly Cities, a Guide](#) provides further detail about infrastructure and other features that enable older people to participate and be included in their communities.

Supporting older workers to continue working or gain employment

Our workforce is ageing and many people need or want to continue working beyond age 65. Many older people contribute to their communities through volunteering and both paid and unpaid work make a valuable contribution to New Zealand's economy.

There is an opportunity to develop our infrastructure so that those who want or need to work as they get older can be enabled to find and stay in work. This will help to retain valuable skills, knowledge and experience within our labour market in infrastructure and other sectors.

Like other population groups, infrastructure that ensures good access to public transport, access to appropriate housing and opportunities for employment that are close to home for older people supports their labour market and social participation. This is also an important consideration for '*Enabling Competitive Cities and Regions*' Action Area.

Seeking diverse views from those who are more likely to be excluded

If infrastructure planning is to support the wellbeing of all New Zealanders, it will be crucial to seek out and include diverse views about this work as the strategy progresses. This will require engagement that extends beyond a digital platform and regional engagement with councils. More marginalised groups (eg, older people, disabled people, people with ongoing and mental health issues, Pacific people and other ethnic minorities) need to be engaged in this discussion directly, especially those who are more likely to be digitally excluded.

Action F4.1 Support local authorities to test district and long term plans against 'high' and 'low' growth scenarios.

Local authorities should also look at the future projected composition of their population and assess the infrastructure impacts of this and test against their LTPs. A joined up approach with health, education and social service providers would also be useful so that planning for infrastructure development does not happen in a silo at this local/regional level.

We understand that most local authorities will not be facing high growth scenarios. We think it is really important that the scenarios should include testing the impacts of different population profiles – particularly given that the ageing of our population will be the paradigm for the majority of our local authorities.

Impacts of population decline

We agree that population decline in some areas will impact the local authorities capacity to manage assets with a decreasing rates base. Increasing numbers of older people are moving into retirement with a mortgage and New Zealand Superannuation is the only income for many who do own their own homes. Home ownership rates are declining for older people and increasing numbers of older people are renting their homes.

Many older people are ageing in smaller regional and rural communities and those on a fixed income may be disproportionately impacted by rates increases if infrastructure costs increase. We would be supportive of measures that help to contain infrastructure costs for

councils that are likely to be passed on to the community through increased rates or other council charges or indirectly through increased rent (to cover increased rates costs for landlords).

Question 5. How could we encourage low-carbon transport journeys, such as public transport, walking, cycling, and the use of electric vehicles including electric bikes and micro-mobility devices?

Urban design and planning must make active and low carbon transport options attractive and easy for all people to use eg, by ensuring that cycle and pedestrian paths are well designed using universal design principles and having separate zones for faster moving electric powered mobility devices such as e-scooters.

Many older people (and others) feel unsafe walking on shared paths with fast moving cycles and scooters. It can be difficult for people with cognitive changes (such as dementia) to navigate outdoor spaces so our infrastructure needs to be easy to use and include good signage, wayfinding and other dementia friendly features that have benefits for a wide range of people.

Paths should be well connected to amenities and services, within and between neighbourhoods to improve walkability and promote social connection. Social connection can also be aided by well designed and located green spaces and parks of all sizes.

We could strengthen our investment in low cost community led infrastructure projects to improve the walkability etc. of neighbourhoods, suburbs and city centres eg, Waka Kotahi's Innovating Streets and similar programmes.

Ensure that public transport is accessible to all, including stations, stops and shelters – make sure these are well lit and provide seating and shelter from heat and cold. Consider the placement of public toilets within the transport network.

As well as helping to reduce carbon emissions and to increase physical activity, promoting active modes of transport through good urban design also helps to encourage social interaction and connection which boosts community wellbeing. This is particularly important for older people who are at risk of social isolation, especially diverse groups and others more likely to be marginalised. It also enables connection between different generations and enables older people to be valued, included and participate in their communities

Universal access to digital services

We need to ensure that our infrastructure supports low cost and reliable digital access for all, especially older people and those living in remote areas who may be at higher risk of social isolation.

Improving digital literacy will help this group, but access to internet services is also important so that they can connect with friends and whānau, and carry out essential tasks such as shopping, paying bills and access health services.

Many older people, especially those who are less confident using online options, continue to use phone services for tasks such as banking. It is important that these alternative ways of communicating are still available for digitally disadvantaged groups of people.

Creating a better system

There is a need for more joined up planning locally and regionally of all infrastructure including health, education, and social services as well as electricity, transport, water, sewerage etc.

The system for infrastructure should include a mechanism to assess the wellbeing impact of proposed investment on communities (eg, a health impact assessment) to ensure that investment aligns with the wellbeing focus of this strategy.