

Positive Ageing Strategy

of the Thames-Coromandel District Council



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Positive Ageing Strategy

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Document designed in-house by Thames-Coromandel District Council



Mayoral Introduction

We are working on building a stronger Coromandel, and we can only do that with the continued support and energy of our older citizens.

Those aged over 65 make a truly valuable contribution to this district. They are the volunteers and the mentors as well as the workforce (just under half received a wage or salary).

This strategy sets out how we plan to incorporate the specific needs of a substantial sector of our community into the thread of what we do.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Glenn Leach". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Glenn Leach
DISTRICT MAYOR

Introduction

Older people currently make up 21% of our District's population. This is projected to increase to 27% by 2024. In the context of this strategy we refer to older people as those 65 and over, consistent with the intention of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy (2001). An ageing population presents both challenges and opportunities for our District going forward.

The Council has committed to developing this strategy to identify its own role in contributing to the needs of older people in order to support 'positive ageing'.

The strategy will assist the Thames-Coromandel District Council in considering the needs of older people when making decisions and to inform older people and other key stakeholders of the Council's response to their needs.





What is Positive Ageing?

The Office for Senior Citizens says that...

“...positive ageing will happen when older people can say that they live in a society that values them, acknowledges their contribution and encourages their participation.”

Positive ageing includes:

- having a stable and secure income
- maintaining good health and positive relationships
- the ability to ‘age in place’ - to make choices about where to live
- the ability to contribute to society in a range of ways and roles
- the choice to work later in life
- access to transport
- being supported to remain self-reliant.

Our communities have a lot to gain from positive ageing: a healthy, happy and confident ageing population contributes a wealth of expertise and skills to the community and the workforce, places less demand on social services and provides positive role models for younger generations.¹

¹ Office for Senior Citizens, 2007: New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy

Developing the Positive Ageing Strategy

The inception of this strategy is not new. The Council decided to prepare a strategy in response to requests received by members of the community as well as the recognition of a broader need to identify the Council's future role in the social development of the District.

The Council recognises that many other agencies will play critical roles in positive ageing. This strategy identifies what the Council will contribute. In determining this, the Council has considered the following:

- what is the Council wanting to achieve for the District?
- what challenges and opportunities is the District facing in relation to positive ageing?
- what have people told us about our potential role in positive ageing?
- what is the Council doing now to promote positive ageing?
- where are there further opportunities where it could help?



Positive Ageing in Aotearoa - New Zealand

Positive ageing is not only about the experience of ageing for older people, but also about the attitudes and expectations younger generations have about older people and their own ageing.

While New Zealand has an ageing population, the growth rate of the population is gradually slowing. This could be attributed to a number of factors including lower fertility rates, fewer and later marriages, older parenting, increased longevity, migration and changing family types. Whilst there is a decline in birth rates, we are experiencing an increase in average life expectancy and the ageing of the 'baby boomer' generation (those born between 1946 and 1965), causing the population of older people to increase.

The development of a Positive Ageing Strategy for New Zealand in 2001 signalled the need for central government policy makers to start focusing on meeting the needs of this changing population and to identify the ways in which older people can be supported to participate in their communities and experience "older age" in a positive way.

Its vision is a society where:

- people can age positively
- older people are highly valued
- older people are recognised as an integral part of families and communities

The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy seeks to address the health and wellbeing and the risk of social exclusion for older people by identifying gaps in government policy where this might contribute to this risk.

While the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy aims to guide decision-making in relation to government policy development and service provision that affect older people, it also identifies the importance of partnerships with local government, communities and support agencies.

The Council is not, and should not be, placed to deliver the same services as central government. However, the Council recognises its role in advocating to various agencies to support positive ageing in the Thames-Coromandel District.

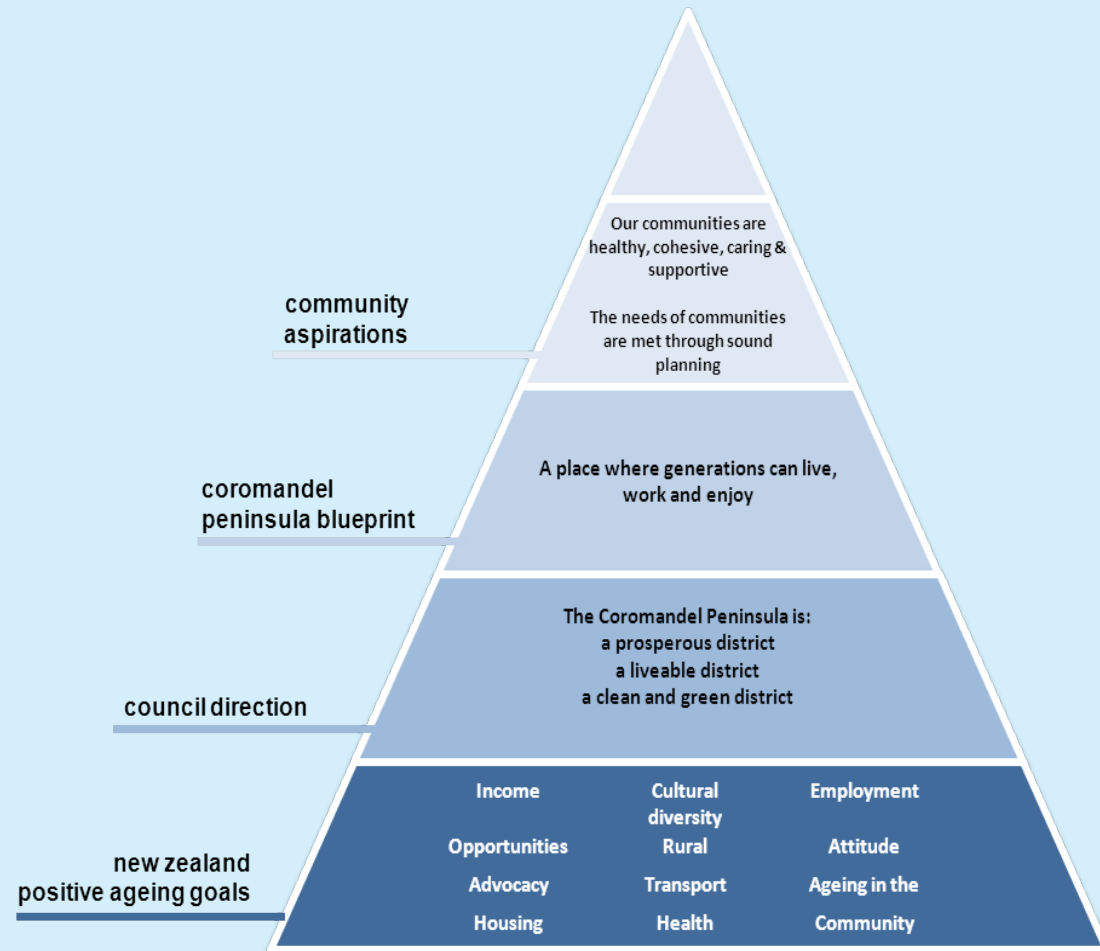
Council Direction

The Council direction sets out what the Council's role will be in contributing to the District.

On behalf of the Coromandel Peninsula, the Council aims to achieve:

- a prosperous district - The Coromandel Peninsula has a prosperous economy
- a liveable district - The Coromandel Peninsula is a preferred area of NZ in which to live, work, raise a family and enjoy a safe and satisfying life
- a clean and green district - The Coromandel Peninsula's natural environment provides a unique sense of place

The Council's and communities' broad objective to build liveable and healthy communities is consistent with the goals of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy.



A Snapshot of Challenges and Opportunities

New Zealand's population is ageing and, according to the Office for Senior Citizens, today's older people differ from previous generations – living longer, working longer and enjoying better health.

Older people will make up a growing share of the population in the medium term

The Thames-Coromandel District is identified as a community with a significant older persons population, with an increased demographic shift in this population anticipated by 2026.

Within the wider Waikato region, the Thames-Coromandel District currently has the highest percent of older persons in their population – (21%)
Waikato DHB

The District has an ageing population with an overall higher than average population for 45-65 years and 65 years and over. Those aged 65+ made up 5,500 people in 2006 (21% of the District population).

The aged population is expected to increase to around 7,000 in 2024 to make up 27% of the population, before falling again to 6,000 or 23% in 2042. This is slightly higher than the projections for New Zealand as a whole. Of the 65+ age bracket, the proportion aged over 75 is expected to remain greater.

“It would be a great misconception to view all people aged over 65 as part of a homogeneous population group. Older people are a widely diverse group – socially and culturally – and will become even more so into the future.”

Age Concern

The population of the Thames-Coromandel District has a higher than average number of residents living in high deprivation and low income, particularly for people aged 65 years and over.²

We expect that our future older population will include people who have already lived in the District as well as new residents moving to the area, such as retirees moving to what may have been their holiday homes.

In 2006, the highest proportion of older people lived in the Whangamata community board area (26%) with the lowest proportion in the Mercury Bay community board area (14%).

Thames, however, has the largest number of older people in their community board area (2,157) and Tairua-Pauanui the lowest (381).

The Council's focus of residential development in the three hubs of Whangamata, Whitianga and Thames aligns with the board areas where most older people live.

Of those aged 65+ in our District in 2006, over 85% of the population identified themselves as New Zealand European. Five per cent were Māori.

² Waikato District Health Board: Planning Today for Tomorrow; Population Health, Future Focus

Today's older generation are different from previous generations

Not only is the proportion of older New Zealanders growing, but they are doing more:

- more than ever before, older people are enjoying good health
- older people want to travel
- familiarisation with new technologies is growing, particularly in the 65-69 age group
- people expect to age in the community for as long as possible³

Age-friendly communities are important for ageing in communities

As people expect to age in their communities for as long as possible, building age-friendly communities is important. This has implications for services provided:

- people feel more socially connected when their housing is close to community amenities. Older rural residents live further from community amenities and therefore may be more vulnerable to transport, support and social isolation challenges

- having access to transport is critical
- feeling safe and secure is important
- suitable housing options are crucial
- the needs of older people are expected to become more diverse

Indeed, the Ministry of Social Development's objective is to ensure older people receive a secure and adequate income, are supported to age in the community if they choose and are easily able to access the services and information they need.⁴

Of those aged 65+ in our District:

- 93% live in private dwellings (of which 85% are owned by themselves)
- their occupancy rates of aged care residential facilities in the District remain fairly steady throughout the year. In September 2011, all five facilities (three in Thames, one each in Whitianga and Whangamata) were over 83% occupied, with one facility fully occupied

^{3,4} Office for Senior Citizens: New Zealanders: Getting Older, Doing More—Briefing to the Incoming Minister

In relation to safety and security:

- most feel a high sense of safety in their community during the day whilst a medium-high sense of safety is felt after dark. People's perceptions about safety do not always reflect the actual risk, but does relate to how safe and secure older people feel

In relation to access to services:

- there is a medium-high level of satisfaction with essential services, infrastructure and facilities, and availability of education in the District
- there is a fairly high level of satisfaction with community and social support they receive
- at the 2006 Census, 97% had access to a telephone, 56% to a cell phone, 39% to the internet and 24% to a fax. This was similar to New Zealand as a whole. Access to telecommunication systems has the potential to reduce isolation and bring better access to services and facilities
- most have a medium-high level of satisfaction with their proximity to recreational, cultural and education facilities (other than schools)
- nationally, 57% of people aged 75+ held a drivers licence in 2007
- barriers to access and transport is a key target area of health promotion for older people in the Waikato Region

Overall:

- most are very happy with their quality of life

Forward planning for retirement is considered essential if the future aged are to enjoy their lifestyle of choice in older age. That means financial planning now. The Retirement Commission has educational processes in place to develop good saving behaviours.⁵

⁵Office for Senior Citizens: New Zealanders: Getting Older, Doing More—Briefing to the Incoming Minister

Expectations for health care and support are high

Older people expect to enjoy good health in old age and receive the health support services they need.

Preventative and primary health care is considered important in helping the aged enjoy good health for as long as possible.⁶

Of those aged 65+ in our District:

- most say they participate in sport or active leisure at least 2-4 times a week
- many older Thames residents are regular users of the Thames Centennial Pool with an average of 329 swims per month
- 14% of those surveyed in 2010 said they or a household member had wanted to see a GP in the last 12 months but hadn't
- their satisfaction with access to, and the range of, health services has increased to a medium-high level
- hospitalisation and mortality rates are consistent with the region and New Zealand as a whole



⁶Office for Senior Citizens: New Zealanders: Getting Older, Doing More—Briefing to the Incoming Minister

For the aged in the Waikato Region:

- key health issues are increasing prevalence of dementia, increase in long-term disability support expenditure and increasing mental health issues. An increasing complexity of care is expected to be required in future
- the leading cause of injury related death in older people are falls. Falls prevention is a key target area of health promotion for older people in the Waikato Region

Greater numbers of older people are opting to stay in the workforce

Nationally, workforce participation among older New Zealanders has risen significantly nationally – it doubled between 1991 and 2001 and continues to grow.⁷

Of those aged 65+ in our District:

- 76% earned less than \$30,000 and 60% less than \$20,000 per annum (2006)
- 42% are considered to receive a 'low' income - one of the highest figures in the Waikato Region
- 90% received income from superannuation or the veterans pension in the 12 months prior the 2006 Census. Just under 50% received a wage or salary
- despite this, most people identified that they were not in the labour force at the time of the Census (i.e. retired) with 15% working part or full time



⁷ Office for Senior Citizens: New Zealanders: Getting Older, Doing More—Briefing to the Incoming Minister

Recognising participation in communities

As workers, volunteers, unpaid caregivers and grandparents, older people have the abilities and experiences that are valuable to the workforce, communities and families.⁸

Those aged 65+ in our District:

- contribute to volunteering - 19% of the aged performed volunteer work in 2006, making up 28% of all volunteers
- participated in education or training at a rate of 10% in 2006
- about 35% of the Māori population can hold a conversation about everyday things in Te Reo Māori (2008)



⁸ Office for Senior Citizens: New Zealanders: Getting Older, Doing More—Briefing to the Incoming Minister

Messages We've Received

The Council has been made aware of key issues for older persons in our district through a number of consultation opportunities undertaken by the Council.⁹

We've heard a variety of messages, from the broad role that the Council should take...

- *focus on education, employment and health for koroua and kuia (elderly)*
- *support the provision of more facilities, including healthcare centres (particularly for the elderly)*
- *encourage young people to live in our towns to support the aged*
- *address rating affordability issues*
- *embrace the "positive ageing strategy" concept*

... to local and issue specific matters:

- *more footpath around Whangamata for older people*
- *more car parks closer to the shops in Thames for its older population*
- *a medical centre is needed in Whitianga*

In particular, a collaborative positive ageing working party has advocated strongly for the Council to develop a positive ageing strategy, including service providers and

agencies representing: Age Concern, Community Waikato, Te Korowai Hauora o Hauraki, Population Health, Thames Health and Disability Resource Centre Trust, BUPA Care, Hetherington House, Grey Power, Stroke NZ and St John.

This working party organised an Older Persons Symposium in 2010 and from there a sub-committee was formed to progress the development of a positive ageing strategy for the Thames-Coromandel District. Issues identified by this group included transport, collaboration, service provision, income, motivation, mental health, funding, housing and isolation.

Whilst advocating on behalf of older persons living in the District, the Positive Ageing Steering Group provided an initial outline to the Council of how a positive ageing strategy would be beneficial in promoting the concept of positive ageing and in supporting the significant population of older people in the District.

All of this feedback has contributed to the development of the Council's own positive ageing strategy.

⁹ Blueprint Possible Futures consultation results; 2009-2019 Ten Year Plan submissions; 2010 Community Perception Survey

What the Council Wants to Achieve

In short, the Council's goal is to:

provide for a District where older people are:

- supported to age positively
- encouraged to participate
- valued and acknowledged for their contribution to society

This is consistent with the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy.



Strategies for Getting There

Recognising that it is only one contributor to positive ageing, the Council will focus its efforts on promoting:

1. ageing in place

building a district where older people are able to live positively

2. inclusive approaches

empowering the community and supporting partnerships that promote positive ageing

3. recreation and leisure opportunities

participation of older people in a range of recreation and leisure opportunities

4. community participation

promoting older people's participation in the community

The Council believes that these areas are where it can best make a difference.



Strategy 1: Promoting Ageing in Place

This means building a district where people of all ages can enjoy a satisfying life. It includes having a reasonable standard of living, including adequate housing, access to transport and a safe and secure environment. On the Coromandel Peninsula, this applies to urban centres as well as our more isolated rural communities.

The Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint sets out strategies to achieve well serviced communities, particularly in Whitianga, Whangamata and Thames. Allowing for a range of housing options is important for promoting affordable living.

Strategy 2: Promoting Inclusive Approaches

This means promoting that the broader community works together to provide an environment where people can age positively. This can range from developing partnerships between local, regional and central government, and communities and support agencies, to empowering communities to progress their own initiatives.

Strategy 3: Promoting Recreation and Leisure Opportunities

This means providing and promoting facilities to enable older people to participate in a range of recreation and leisure opportunities.

Strategy 4: Promoting Participation in the Community

The Council recognises the knowledge, wisdom, skills and experience that older people can contribute to the Peninsula. This strategy involves providing opportunities for the aged to contribute to the District by building on this wealth of experience. It also means valuing and respecting older people's participation in our communities.

Implementation and Review

This is a revised version of the Positive Ageing Strategy as at November 2012. It has two supporting documents.

Supporting Information Item A outlines what the Council is already doing that supports positive ageing on the Coromandel Peninsula (at the time of writing). Supporting Information Item B is an action plan that sets out additional things that the Council could do to further promote: ageing in place, inclusive approaches, recreation and leisure opportunities, and community participation.

The action plan will be reviewed annually, and all actions are subject to prioritisation and funding allocation in the Council's annual plan and ten year plan planning processes.

The Positive Ageing Strategy will be reviewed triennially (every three years).

The growing, ageing population is a source of both joy and worry; joy because people are living longer and are healthier, and worry about how to best respond to a future with a larger, older population, with their rightful demands and needs.

F. Honsell

References

Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint Partners, 2010: *Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint: Framework for our Future*.

International Research Consultants, 2010: *Waikato Community Outcomes 2010 Thames-Coromandel Summary Report August 2010*. Prepared for Environment Waikato Regional Council.

Ministry of Social Development, 2001: *New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy*.

Ministry of Social Development, 2007: *Positive Ageing Indicators 2007*.

Ministry of Social Development, 2010: 2010 Social Report.

Office for Senior Citizens, 2008: *New Zealanders: Getting Older, Doing More – Briefing to the Incoming Minister*.

Statistics New Zealand, 2001: *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 2001*.

Statistics New Zealand, 2006: *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 2006*.

Waikato District Health Board, Population Health, 2011: Customised Data.

Discussions were also held with staff and/or representatives from the following agencies:

Age Concern

Community Waikato

Grey Power

Hauraki Family Violence Intervention Network

Mercury Bay Community Board

Office for Senior Citizens

Te Korowai Hauora o Hauraki

Thames-Coromandel District Council

Thames Hospital

Waikato District Health Board

