

2 December 2024

The Ministry of Health - Manatū Hauora  
Strategy Group  
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**Submission on proposed LTI Briefing topic: *Unlocking the potential of active ageing***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed long-term insight briefing (LTIB) topic, *Unlocking the potential of active ageing*.

The Kāpiti Coast district has grown significantly over the last 30 years and is expected to continue to grow as its proximity to Wellington, lifestyle offering, and more affordable housing options continue to attract residents to the area. This includes a high proportion of residents looking to move to the district to retire, or with the intention of retiring.

Having an older and aging population means it's important for us to understand the changing needs of our community and to enable us to continue to grow-well and support active aging.

As our older population has been a long-term element of our district's make-up, we welcome the opportunity to support this LTIB topic and to share some of the challenges we face, as well as the work we have; and look forward to gaining further insights for active ageing from your work.

In preparing this submission, we have engaged with our Older Persons Council (which has made its own submission) and Kāpiti Health Advisory Group.

**1. Do you think 'active ageing' is a critical topic to explore in a Long-term Insights Briefing? Why or why not?**

Overall, we are very supportive of the need to explore active ageing through your LTIB. The groups we have drawn insights from note that 'active ageing' can include a range of things to people, in line with a wellbeing approach and te ao Māori concepts of health (for example that articulated in the Te Whare Tapa Wha model). We need to future proof our country and provide support for active aging in each district, that looks to its unique needs, barriers and

opportunities. Looking into active aging creates a safer future for our communities and provides a way for society to continue to be safe, connected and resilient as our aging populations grow.

This includes understanding how we grow, how we build houses that can meet changing needs of its population, provide community services and infrastructure to support connections and healthy lifestyle options, support options that allow residents to move freely and access core services; and lastly, equitable access to health services.

Council is already supporting work and outcomes for our aging population across these areas through our strategies and partnerships including:

- [Te Ara Manaaki i ngā Kaumātua | Age Friendly Approach 2023](#) – guides Council’s strategic, policy and operational decision making and is based on the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Framework.
- [Te Tupu Pai | Growth Strategy](#) – a 30-year strategy guiding urban development that, among other growth principles, seeks to foster strong communities, enhance choice and deliver well-designed communities that support access and connectivity.
- [Housing Needs Assessment](#) and [Housing Strategy 2022](#) – identifies the housing needs of our community, including housing for elderly and intergenerational needs.
- [Economic Development Strategy 2023](#) and [Workforce Plan 2022](#) – recognises skills and experience of older persons to contribute to economic outcomes of the district.
- **Health Strategy (in development – [direction of travel](#) )** – focuses on equitable access to health services and needs of the district – with physical access to services, and costs increasingly impacting affordability with most on fixed incomes.

## 2. What are the main risks of not further enabling ‘active ageing’ over the next 20 years?

As our older population grows, not enabling active aging presents a number of risks that could have a significant individual and cumulative effect on our communities, including:

- *Increased pressure on New Zealand’s health system:* Under-provision or inadequate funding of facilities and support networks for active ageing will result in significant increased public health costs in later years from hospitalisation and medical needs that might have been otherwise avoided or mitigated.
- *Increased social housing needs:* A lack of access to safe, warm and secure housing and the ability to afford private retirement options (including with more complex services), may be prohibitive for an increasing number of elderly living longer.
- *Increased social isolation and loss of wellbeing:* Lack of options may see residents moving away from their friends, family and communities. Without opportunities for connection and positive engagement and activities, there is a greater risk of isolation and reduction in individual well-being and health outcomes.
- *Increased loss of labour and volunteer workforce:* Older residents currently contribute their skills experience to the workforce and volunteer roles. Risks to active engagement could see this vital contribution to communities reduce.
- *Increasing social burden on society, individuals and families:* Loss of connection and independence creates a greater need for paid professional services or in home care, placing increased pressures on services, but also individuals, family and whānau.

Our community is raising these concerns with us already through our regular community engagement and initiatives like [Vision Kāpiti](#). Some submissions emphasise the urgent nature of these needs already. Understanding active ageing in more detail through the long term insights briefing will help us to plan for supporting our community in these respects as we plan infrastructure and advocacy that can deliver what our community needs.

### **3. What health-promoting and supportive environments would better enable ‘active ageing’?**

Health promoting and supportive environments need to be holistic and well-designed. This includes the ability to connect with others, exercise and enjoy the outdoors and a healthy lifestyle, and access those supporting services required to live a fulfilling life in older age. The submission from the Kāpiti Coast Older Persons Council sets this out well and Council supports the points made. The following are additional points that a LTIB on this topic could consider enabling active ageing in the areas highlighted.

- *Access to supporting health services locally:* There is currently a lack of primary health care capacity, including timely access to GPs and urgent care services. Availability and access to primary and supporting services, such as chemists, is important to support equitable outcomes.
- *Transport options to access and connect:* Transport to access services and connect can be challenging as people age. Active and public transport options play increasing importance especially in areas designed with cars in mind, which are difficult to access where private transport options are restricted or not available.
- *Suitable housing options:* Flexibly designed housing that provides greater options for aging in place. This includes the availability of smaller sized, single level units, that are wheelchair accessible. Central government provision for Council's to provide community housing, including access to Income Related Rent Subsidy, would also enable Council's to better meet local needs.
- *Integrated services to meet local needs including accessible public spaces and urban design:* The LTIB should also consider the combined roles of all agencies and entities supporting active ageing. This includes local government's role, but also other regional and central government agencies involved in providing key services and infrastructure supporting and future proofing positive outcomes for active aging.
- *Availability of information:* There needs to be better access to information including availability of facilities, social services, and social connection opportunities. This is particularly important as traditional sources of information are declining in light of digital formats, which is often difficult for the elderly to access and read (small fonts, poor formats, high complexity, not aimed for blind, deaf etc). Government agencies, Councils and all service providers should be conscious of information accessibility including digital inclusion for the elderly.

### **4. What barriers to ‘active ageing’ do you see in our environment and society?**

We see a number of barriers to active ageing, which would be helpful for this work to identify and better understand including:

- *Perceptions and traditional approaches:* Perhaps the most significant barrier is the current settings and expectations society has for ageing – and the shift with many over

65 now looking to continue to actively participate in and contribute to society. The older workforce is a particular strength and resource identified for our district in our Workforce Plan 2022. The Plan seeks to grow the potential for age friendly businesses to access and utilise these skills and support growth and wellbeing outcomes. Initiatives like the WHO's age friendly cities approach (which was adopted for our Age-friendly approach as noted, earlier) and related initiatives that reduce stigma and enable full participation in society (for example, [Dementia Friendly NZ](#)) would be helpful to include as part of the LTIB as ways to help reduce such barriers.

- *Lack of services and options:* as already noted, access to appropriate housing options and health care services is critical to enabling active ageing. This should also ensure that retirement housing options are designed to enable integration with the wider community to maintain independence and social connection as much as possible.
- *Lack of accessibility:* For many older people in Kāpiti, mobility is an issue which can lead to lost independence and participation. Kāpiti has limited district and regional public transport options, but some form of assistance, such as gold card and mobility cards is vital to support those who are able to use public transport. Support is also needed for voluntary groups providing transport to health services, recreational activities and other essential services to address the lack of current service provided locally to meet this need. It would be beneficial for the LTIB to thoroughly canvas transport and network needs and service provision for places like Kāpiti facing these challenges now.
- *Financial barriers:* As more people move into retirement and onto fixed incomes, their ability to pay for services (including health services) and the transport can change. This can be a barrier to accessing needed health and social services, living requirements (grocery shopping) and social/cultural interactions and relationships. It is important, therefore, that as a community, and wider society, we develop our urban form, services, institutions in an age friendly manner.

## **5. What are the most important focus areas for enabling or demonstrating the impact of active ageing**

We support all six of the focus areas identified. All have a key link to challenges and opportunities in Kāpiti. We would also support discussion in the LTIB on the roles and responsibilities across government and other organisations and wider society. We know that as a territorial local authority we have key roles across these focus areas including the provision of community facilities and services, urban design, and working with and advocating for our community's needs.

The LTIB should also look at challenges for more rural areas, especially where there are increasing numbers of people retiring to these areas. In our district, the Ministry of Health's Rural Health Strategy classifies us as a rural 1 category, due to the distance to a regional hospital. We know this can lead to challenges for parts of our district.

In particular, Ōtaki has limited retirement, residential care and palliative care options. This has resulted in some locals in later life being moved outside of our district for these services, which affects the ability of their whānau, hapu and iwi to wrap around and support them. This is a particular concern for our mana whenua in Ōtaki. This situation is worsened by the lack of public transportation options available in the area.

Increased flexible housing options that support intergeneration options for aging in place, are of interest to support other options for whānau to provide direct support.

The Ōtaki Priority Development Area project recognises these issues as one of seven focus areas across the Horowhenua – Wellington – Wairarapa supporting central and local government are iwi working in partnership to address these issues across the region.

**Kāpiti as a case study for active aging**

Given our interest and the relevance of the LTIB to our district we would welcome working further with the Ministry of Health on this work. This would help support work we are looking to commence to better understanding our community's social needs, including access to core health and social services, which continues to be an ongoing issue for the district.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darren Edwards', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Darren Edwards  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
**KĀPITI COAST DISTRICT COUNCIL**