

Making Tasman Great for Older People – Summary Results

Creating an Age-Friendly Tasman

How can we make it easier for our older residents to get out and about, participate in social activities or employment and achieve good health?



Background

During September/October 2017, Tasman District Council sought feedback to identify what's working well and what could be improved for our older adults' quality of life and their physical and mental wellbeing. The feedback will be used to inform the drafting of our Long Term Plan for 2018 – 2028, and to develop an Age-Friendly Policy.

Residents were given the opportunity to either complete a survey or to attend three drop-in sessions (Richmond, Motueka and Murchison). There was no drop-in session held in Golden Bay as Age Concern had recently run focus groups there on a similar topic and offered to share their research. Hard copies of the survey were made available at Council service centres and libraries and a link to the online survey was included in Newsline, Council's website and Facebook.

Feedback was received from 81 people and agencies.

The main topics covered were:

- Housing
- Transport options
- Built environment and urban design
- Social participation and connection
- Health

The main areas of concern are housing, transport options and footpaths.

HOUSING

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
There is a good range of housing suitable for older people.	23%	47%	30%
There is enough housing in the locations older people want to live.	21%	49%	30%
There is enough affordable housing for older people.	12%	57%	31%

There was a lot of feedback from across the District on the need for a wider range of housing which are smaller, close to services, low-maintenance, warm, affordable and designed for older people. This included consideration of including Lifemark Design Standards within the TRMP and for Council units. Lifemark principles of lifetime design ensure houses that enable people to age in place and also lessen the impact of falls.

There was feedback on the growing proportion of older people who are renters and suggestions for more social housing and/or Council units, particularly in Motueka, Richmond and Murchison. Murchison residents expressed concern that the current Council units are in need of an upgrade and that their condition (apart from unit #2) is the reason there is no waiting list. There was a suggestion to use the land owned by Council next to the current units.

People commented that they would like more units within a complex, or community-based alternatives to retirement villages, particularly with a rental option. Waimea Village, Abbeyfield and a cohousing project in Dunedin were given as examples. People commented on the lack of affordable rentals with secure tenure.

There was feedback that Motueka needs another retirement village.

People also raised the issue of home and garden maintenance becoming a challenge as they age, even small tasks such as changing lightbulbs.

We don't want to go to a retirement village over the hill, away from the family

Older people who need to downsize are unable to find or afford smaller residences. Definite need for small units in village-like areas, with shared vegetable gardens, meeting spaces etc.

Our population is ageing - and good accommodation is needed - not multi room mansions

TRANSPORT AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
Transport services	20%	80%
Footpaths	48%	52%
Pedestrian crossings	62%	38%
Toilets	63%	37%
Parking	65%	35%
Cycleways	65%	35%
Seating in public places	72%	28%
Signage in public places	84%	16%

Transport and parking

Eighty percent of survey respondents were dissatisfied with transport services, which was the highest level of dissatisfaction in the survey.

It was noted that mobility is a key element for older people to maintain independence but that people's ability and confidence to drive often reduces as we age.

Although there are several shuttle services available in the District, the general perception was that these are for medical appointments only.

In Murchison, a trust has been set up to buy a vehicle that will likely be operated in a similar way to Golden Bay's Wrinklies Express.

There was support for the following:

- public transport or shuttle services to Nelson, from Motueka, Wakefield, Brightwater
- taxi or shuttle services for around Motueka, and for around Golden Bay, which could be a community-run shuttle service
- extending the bus service in Richmond
- including the mobility of older people as an element in the Regional Transport Strategy
- introducing transport safety awareness programs, including mobility scooter workshop (see Tauranga Travel Safe programme)
- seating and shelter at bus stops and larger print size in bus timetables.

There are no taxis in Motueka - this is a disaster for elderly people unable to drive. There is a shuttle service for doctors, dentists etc. but for people who want to shop independently and to go to our wonderful library there is nothing.

There were concerns about poor visibility at Motueka intersections, especially Pah/Greenwood/High St, and a suggestion for yellow lines on all corners, especially Inglis St, Tudor St West.

There was a suggestion for recharging stations for mobility scooters.

In terms of parking, there is demand for more parking, close to services and supermarkets, including more mobility car parks. There were suggestions of courtesy 'age-friendly' car parks for either older people or parents with young children. Clearer delineation of pedestrian walkways in Richmond Mall car park and a safety review of the Four Square car park in Murchison were also suggested.

Footpaths, pedestrian crossings, and cycleways

It was noted that walking and cycling are low-impact forms of exercise and that physical activity among older people has been linked to better cognitive performance and increased mental wellbeing.

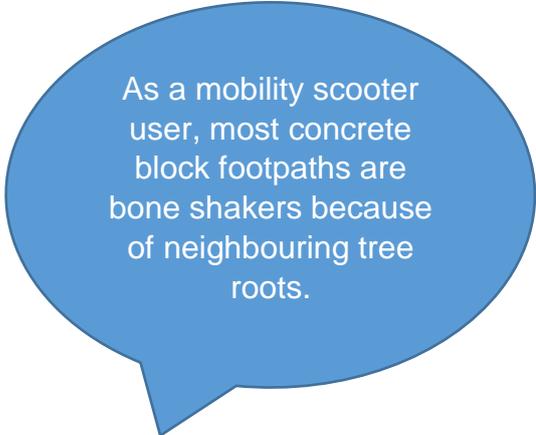
Just over half (52%) of the survey respondents were dissatisfied with footpaths, the second highest level of dissatisfaction in the survey.

Older people would like footpaths to be wider and flatter, without any dips. Trip hazards and uneven paving need to be repaired and obstacles, such as vegetation, sandwich boards and recycling bins, need to be reduced. High curbs by accessibility carparks need to be removed. Cyclists and kids on scooters using footpaths can be challenging for older people.

More footpaths were requested, especially at the following locations:

- Between Takaka and the medical centre
- North Thorp St and Staples St, towards the Kumeras, Motueka
- Mapua

Repairs were requested at 48-60 Tudor St, Motueka, and potholes on road verges in Mapua.



As a mobility scooter user, most concrete block footpaths are bone shakers because of neighbouring tree roots.

Thirty-five percent were dissatisfied with cycleways. There were several comments about cycling being too dangerous in Golden Bay and cycleways are needed. It was noted that improvements are needed on the shared pathway network through Richmond where it intersects main roads, particularly Champion/Salisbury Roads and Lower Queen St/SH6.

Thirty-eight percent were dissatisfied with pedestrian crossings. There is demand for safer places to cross around Richmond, such as traffic islands and pedestrian crossings. More pedestrian crossings are wanted in Motueka, including on Tudor St, near High St. It was noted that the kerbs and camber of Fairfax St, Murchison makes it difficult to cross in mobility scooters.

Toilets

Thirty-seven percent were dissatisfied with toilets and older people would like more toilets, particularly in main streets, in Motueka, Sundial Square and in parks and reserves. It was suggested that the Motueka toilets need an upgrade. Also suggested was an audit of toilets, particularly accessible toilets, to ensure the number will meet future demand.

Seating

Seating is important for older people in providing a place to take a rest as well as a place for people to socialise. Older people would like more seating in our town centres, on routes connecting suburbs and town centres, and in parks. More picnic tables are wanted in town parks to provide a place to have a packed lunch. There was also feedback that gathering spaces and social seating would provide a destination for older people when they come to town, and would add vitality to the town centre.

Feedback was also received to consider older people in the design of seating.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND CONNECTION

Do you get out and about as much as you would like?	Yes 79%	No 16%	Don't know 5%
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At least 16% of survey respondents don't get out and about as much as they would like. The main barriers appear to be transport, mobility, lack of activities and low income.

There was also feedback that people don't know their neighbours, especially when neighbouring properties are rentals with a high turnover, and they feel unsafe and isolated in their own home.

I can't be independent without having to get someone to drive me places.

Feedback from the survey and drop-in sessions indicate that, in general, older people are relatively satisfied with the provision of events and activities across the District, and the suitability of Council facilities.

	% Agree
There are enough events and activities for older people that are affordable.	69%
There are enough opportunities for physical activity for older people.	77%
There is a wide variety of events and activities for older people.	86%
The Council and community facilities/buildings are suitable for older people.	87%
Events and activities for older people are at convenient times and places.	90%

There were some suggestions for improvement to events and activities:

- Gold card discount or free entry to Richmond Aquatic Centre and other venues/activities
- Swimming pool in Motueka and Golden Bay
- Outdoor exercise areas
- Tai Chi sessions
- Beach ramps
- Improved library in Motueka
- More comfortable seating at Murchison Rec Centre
- Improved accessibility at Murchison Library
- Hobby classes and day trips (Murchison and other rural areas)
- Better promotion of activities and facilities, including regular updates in Mudcake and Roses
- Movie theatre, or movies in Town Hall (Richmond)
- Mini Age Expos in town centre locations
- Something like Stoke Seniors in Richmond
- More vertical integration and ways for different age groups to mix

The Murchison Library provides mobility-impaired access at the back door but this needs better signage and clearer delineation along the driveway which is shared with Fulton Hogan trucks.

The free, local papers were suggested as a good way to inform older people about services, events and activities. There was a suggestion to include phone numbers so that people can check if events are suitable.

Are there enough opportunities for older people to keep working, either paid employment or volunteering?	Yes	No	Don't know
	54%	17%	30%

In general, feedback indicated there are enough volunteering opportunities but limited opportunities for paid work. People mentioned age-discrimination and the need for employer incentives or a central registry that could match older workers with employers.

HEALTH

Is there a good range of health and community support services for older people?	Yes	No	Don't know
	53%	24%	24%

The main issues raised were:

- Lack of diagnostic services (Richmond and Motueka)
- Lack of staff and difficulty getting GP appointments, particularly in Golden Bay
- Lack of cardiac support and advice in Golden Bay
- Costs of services and medication
- Lack of in-home support

The main health issues that people felt need more community support were mental health and isolation. There were also suggestions to consider creating dementia-friendly communities, noting an Australian toolkit for local government has been developed which identifies improvements that can be made to physical environments, signage, and communication methods.