

# **Rising to the Challenge:**

## **The Role of Christian Social Services in Matching Older Peoples Housing with Support Needs**

New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services

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### **NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL SERVICES**

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## **NZCCSS – Who we are**

### **Overview**

*The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) represents six denominations: the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Presbyterian social services agencies, as well as the Methodist and the Salvation Army churches.*

*Collectively, these six members are responsible for over 500 social service delivery sites in their networks throughout New Zealand.*

*Our members deliver a wide range of services that cover such areas as child and family services, services for older people, foodbank and emergency services, housing, budgeting, disability, addictions, community development and employment services.*

*This size and diversity in services are amongst the many reasons for NZCCSS to celebrate its membership and the work that they do to meet people's needs throughout New Zealand.*

### **NZCCSS Mission and Role**

*NZCCSS works for a just and compassionate society in Aotearoa New Zealand. We see this as a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ. In seeking to fulfil this mission, we are committed to:*

- *giving priority to the poor and vulnerable members of our society*
- *honouring Te Tiriti O Waitangi*

*The key roles of NZCCSS are to represent the common interests and vision of our members at the national level; to supply information and networking opportunities to support members provide quality services; and to develop, critique and advocate for policies that will assist poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged members of society.*

*A national Council, made up of two representatives from each denomination, governs NZCCSS.*

*A small Secretariat team carries out the day-to-day work of the Council. This includes gathering and distributing information, research on social policy issues, and building relationships with government officials and others working in the community sector.*

*A Policy Group oversees the policy and research work that NZCCSS does in three key areas: child and family, housing and poverty, and services for older people. Each Policy Group is made up of at least two council representatives plus social services managers, academics or others with particular expertise in that area. This means that the work NZCCSS does is well informed by what is happening in our members' communities.*

[www.nzccss.org.nz](http://www.nzccss.org.nz)

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## Executive Summary

New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) is concerned that the changing environment in services for older people will lead to accommodation problems for many low-income older people. This report looks at some case studies of supported independent accommodation (SIA). The focus has been on considering sustainable housing options for older people who cannot afford retirement villages, and low-cost housing appropriate to the needs of older people with various levels of functional impairment.

Christian social service organisations have a significant existing and potential contribution to make in housing for older people. Existing networks of informal support and skilled professional service providers, existing buildings and land, and investment capital are some of these elements.

With the projected ageing population it is important we address future housing options for low-income older people. Current government policies (e.g. Positive Ageing Strategy, Health of Older People Strategy and the *New Zealand Housing Strategy*) recognise that the provision of housing strongly impacts on other health and social outcomes for older people.

New Zealand is not the first developed country to be confronted with the issues of an ageing population. The experience of other countries further down the path of an ageing population is informative. SIA in a range of forms is one of the key ways that other countries have responded to helping older people with high needs to live in the community.

Several other elements are vital for the future well-being of older people. Universal design featuring assistive technologies should be incorporated, enabling people to continue to live in their own place as they age and functional impairment increases. Providing effective programmes for modification of existing homes is an internationally proven response to helping older people to continue healthy and socially integrated lives in their own homes.

The heart of this project is telling the stories of practical work by NZCCSS member organisations offering models of SIA. The eight case studies give an insight into the practicalities of making SIA work. The key learnings are summarised under three broad themes:

- **Integrating housing and support** to provide supportive environments.
- The role of **partnerships** in providing older people with solutions to ageing in place.
- **Gaps in providing support** to older people.

### Integrating housing and support

Integrating housing and support to provide supportive environments involves a number of factors. High quality needs assessments for people moving into supported living arrangements are important so appropriate accommodation can be offered. Client input into project planning, feedback and identifying risk areas is vital for the success of a project. The residents are looking for supportive environments with safety and security of community and companionship, as well as information about other services and advocacy.

Supportive environments are enhanced through the informal support provided by agencies "going the extra mile". Planners and funders should not take this for granted and such support has both advantages and disadvantages. All the projects showed in differing ways a commitment to low-income older people. A consequence for some agencies is the marginal financial viability of the projects. For their continued success it is important to have the right mix of services and government policy support.

## **Partnerships**

Good project **partnerships** are important in ensuring successful SIA projects. NZCCSS member organisations have large resources of experience in working with older people, of buildings and land and some financial resources

Given the right attitudes and policies, local authorities, central government and community partnerships are all workable. There are opportunities for more partnerships between community organisations through cooperation in service delivery, rationalising management, administration and compliance costs, sharing expertise on project management issues or the compliance issues of legislation.

## **Gaps in the support spectrum**

The third theme identified in the case studies was **gaps in the support spectrum**. A great range of possible options exists across the continuum between residential aged care and full independent living. For low-income older people there are many accommodation and support gaps.

- There is a significant policy gap between social housing and care services, with funding and operational silos of the various government agencies hindering innovation and initiative.
- Health care funders are reluctant to consider housing projects.
- One pressing gap is housing for older people with high needs who do not qualify for residential aged care.

Our case studies highlight some pragmatic, locally-based innovations to deal with the policy gaps. Government and local authorities need to share some of the social risk taken on by social services providers in their work filling gaps in the support continuum for older people

## **Future Scenarios in Older People's Housing**

Housing for older people is a long-term investment with the associated risks of trying to predict housing trends. We have analysed future scenarios for housing and older people based on experience in other countries and New Zealand research on trends and drivers of the housing market.

Key factors driving the market include:

- technological change in the way accommodation is built and in controlling the ambient environment
- an increasing number of households relative to population
- recognising that houses that exist now will comprise 70 percent of the future housing stock in 25 years time.
- the impact of climate change.

Variable factors interact with these, producing possible scenarios that need to be planned for when developing accommodation projects for older people. They include:

- regional economics and communities

- social aspirations and attitudes (particularly rising expectations of all older people about services and accommodation)
- resource availability
- infrastructure.

This analysis shows that social service providers should support particularly low-income older people as they seek appropriate modifications to existing homes. Investment in quality, affordable supported independent accommodation with strong social support links and built with sustainable materials, affordable modern technologies and adaptable to changing needs will be a sound investment into the future.

### **Working with Key Government Agencies**

We have looked at ways of working successfully with three key public sector partners for SIA projects: Housing NZ Corporation (HNZC), Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs) and District Health Boards (DHBs). HNZC sees its main work for older people's housing through the Housing Innovation Fund (HIF) and Community Housing Aotearoa (CHAI). Their entirely different planning processes, operational structures and funding and contracting processes are a hindrance in developing new projects.

Analysis of implementation of the 2005 *NZ Housing Strategy* suggests slow progress in key areas such as implementation of universal design, cross-departmental cooperation and evaluative research on housing models for older people.

### **Recommendations**

NZCCSS:

1. encourages members to involve themselves in the CHAI networks and consider applying for HIF funding as soon as possible.
2. recommends that Government policy makers continue demonstrating a commitment to housing for older people by strengthening the work and capacity of both CHAI and HIF. The HIF should be continued and expanded; this model of project funding has a significant "multiplier" effect, as community resources are matched with public funding. Reviewing the 10-year limit on interest-free loans from HIF and a clearer funding application process will also help improve financial viability of marginal projects.
3. recommends members strengthen their engagement with District Health Boards and Territorial Local Authorities asking them to show how they are meeting their statutory obligations to provide supported accommodation for older people as set out in the Health of Older People Strategy and the Local Government Act 2002.
4. recommends members explore pragmatic, locally-based solutions and coordinated regional responses with local authorities, DHBs, community organisations, housing and social service agencies around issues related to older peoples' supported housing. These could include streamlining funding through regional initiatives, and pooling funding from different agencies to target accommodation for older people.
5. recommends HNZC and other government agencies formally adopt universal design and affordable assistive technology principles in the planning and building of all future public housing.
6. recommends that member agencies and government extend programmes that support all older people to appropriately modify their homes.