

A CALL FOR MORE ACTION

Five Things You Can Do

1. Reflect on the impact of ageing on your life, your family and your friends – how will you ensure your quality of life as an older person?
2. Within your community seek and discuss opinions about the challenges of ageing and consider responses. Those responses might include asking what kinds of services or support are missing for older people in your community or volunteering your time to visit people who are receiving care but who are isolated from family and friends.
3. Invite someone from a local service (e.g. a rest home or a home help service near to you) to talk with your congregation or group about the challenges that older people face.
4. Think hard about political policy statements – what questions can you put to your local politicians and candidates about their policies? Do they have specific policies to address fundamental changes brought about by an ageing population? What steps will they introduce to provide a range of choices for older people? How will services be funded?
5. Become a champion for older people in your community by growing your own and your family's awareness of social justice issues. Visit our website, www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz for links to useful information.

We welcome your ideas and suggestions about issues affecting older people. The postal address for NZCCSS is PO Box 12-090, Thorndon, Wellington or email us at info@justiceandcompassion.org.nz

NZCCSS members include Anglican Care Network, Baptist Union of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Methodist Church of New Zealand, Presbyterian Support New Zealand and the Salvation Army.



New Zealand Council of
Christian Social Services

“What choices will we have as we get older?”





Let's celebrate the success story of living longer!

The fact that more people are living longer than ever before is something we should be celebrating as an outstanding achievement. Older people make huge contributions to maintaining our social fabric through their life skills and life experience; be that as workers, as parents or grandparents, as caregivers or as active members of the community.

A valued place for older people?

Living longer and generally healthier lives is creating fundamental changes. The numbers alone speak for themselves:

- In eight years' time it has been estimated there will be nearly 200,000 more older people
- In about 15 years' time there will be more people aged over 65 than children aged 15 or less and the number of people aged over 85 will have doubled to about 110, 000.

We would all wish to live in a society that values the lives of older people. Yet all too often older people are portrayed as a burden on society, suffer from ageism, are exploited or even abused. The high esteem in which elders - kaumatua and kuia - are held in the Māori culture, for instance, is not necessarily reflected in our society's dominant attitudes.

The realities of our ageing population have a very real human dimension. As we age many of us are likely to face some degree of social isolation, loneliness or depression. And for the two-thirds of older people who are almost entirely dependent on Government Superannuation there can be a fine line between 'making do' and struggling to make ends meet as living costs rise.

What choices will we have as we grow older?

We are all faced with some challenging questions: Where and how shall we live? Who is there to help us when it is needed? What choices do we have?

As more and more of us live longer lives, these questions become more complex. A failure to provide a range of answers to these questions increases the likelihood that as we age we may be left vulnerable to poverty, loneliness and sickness. Christian social services have a long tradition of supporting older people, of developing innovative responses to needs and of seeking to work in partnership with government to plan future services.

We know that, wherever we choose to live and particularly for those with little wealth or high needs:

- We need support from care workers and health professionals who are well-trained to give the best care and support regardless of setting.
- Existing homes will need to be modified to better suit changing needs and many of us will need advice and financial assistance to do this.
- Good support networks reduce loneliness and are the lifeblood of vibrant communities.

Real choices as we age – let us look after each other

Independence for older people often means maintaining choice and control. This is done by making sure that healthcare, support services and strong communities are available when needed. This reflects a central message of Christian teaching that we are all interdependent and need to look after each other. This is the way towards a truly just and compassionate society.

We have made some suggestions on the next page for some practical actions we could all take.