Resilient Ageing in Place
Older Māori Report & Recommendations
Introduction

This report arises from an HRC-funded project on Resilient Ageing in Place, which explored the question of ‘What is the ideal place in which to grow older?’ In the project, more than 120 older people from two communities (Glen Innes in Auckland, and Tokoroa in the South Waikato) participated in workshops, focus groups, and interviews to discuss what elements of their homes, neighbourhoods, and communities enable them to ‘age well’. We first outline a set of overarching principles drawn from all the data, followed by some background on the Resilient Ageing project. Quotes and ideas from Māori participants are then presented, plus the recommendations they made. Many participants appreciated the way they can age in place but also expressed frustration about not being heard by policy makers and service providers; we hope these guiding principles will help turn recommendations into action.

Principles for Resilient Ageing in Place

These six overarching principles need to frame policy, research and service provision in relation to ageing and place.

1. Emphasise the need to consider ageing in place at different scales and in relation to different sectors beyond just the level of housing, including neighbourhoods, communities, infrastructure, fiscal policies, and cultural needs.

2. Address the issue of inequalities and inequities in ‘ageing in place’ including housing, health, care and support services, finances, transport, cultural amenities, remembering that older people are not an homogeneous group.

3. Ensure that policies and strategies prioritise the need for older people to have choices for ageing in place. Barriers to there being a range of options need to be addressed, recognising that ageing in place includes private and residential care as well as staying in one’s home or community.

4. Commit to the need for partnership with diverse older people in developing and implementing policies, practices, and research that affect both them and the wider community, recognising the skills and advocacy roles that older people possess.

5. Take into account Māori self-determination in relation to whenua, tangata whenua, te reo Māori ngā tikanga, marae, urupā, wānanga, whakapapa.


Citation: Mere Kēpa, Janine Wiles, Kirsty Wild (2011) Resilient Ageing in Place Older Māori Report and Recommendations, The University of Auckland, Auckland. Further publications and reports are also available, please contact Janine Wiles: j.wiles@auckland.ac.nz
Background: The Research Process

The Resilient Ageing in Place project asked diverse groups of older New Zealanders ‘What is the ideal place to grow older?’ The reason we asked this question is because in recent times there has been a lot of debate about the living conditions of older New Zealanders. The New Zealand population is ‘ageing’, so as we grow older, where and how do we want to live? When asked these questions, most older people say that they would like to stay in their communities rather than go into institutional care.

Therefore, if community living is the ideal, then what makes a place liveable for older New Zealanders? In this study, we asked this question of the older Māori living in Glen Innes/Ukutoia, Auckland, and Tokoroa what they thought about these questions. We worked with the Ruakawa Trust Board in Tokoroa and the Ruapotaka marae in Ukutoia, and they helped us to set up and run five focus groups with older Māori, in 2008. Four focus groups were held in Tokoroa and they were facilitated by staff members from the Raukawa Trust Board. One focus group was held in Ukutoia at the Ruapotaka marae, and it was facilitated by a Māori researcher from the University of Auckland.

Why did we use the term ‘Resilient’ Ageing in Place?

We used the term ‘resilient’ ageing in place because we wanted to recognise the strengths of older people. As the famous quote says “old age ain’t no place for sissies”, and there are certainly a lot of hard things about getting older, particularly where health is concerned. However, older people are also the “strongest of the strong.” After a lifetime of dealing with the good and the bad, older people are amongst the most ‘resilient’ members of our community. So we believe that older people need communities and community living policies that value, protect, and enhance this resilience.

When the researchers asked older Māori what resilience means to them, they said that resilient ageing in place is very much about whānau and aroha:

“We’ve held on to what it is that makes us resilient: being ... whānau oriented.”

“Resilience is ... helping each other” (Ukutoia)

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1 Ukutoia is the traditional Māori name for the Glen Innes area. This was the name for the area used by participants in the Māori focus group held at Ruapotaka Marae. Ukutoia means to pull the waka up on to the clay.
2 Quote attributed to Henry Louis Mencken
3 Hamarat et al, 2002, pg. 365
4 Research shows that while older people often experience more significant hardship than younger people, they also have a greater range of experience or resilience resources, for instance they have more accumulated knowledge and expertise; better skills in life planning, life management, and emotion management; they have a greater sense of self-worth and self-acceptance; they are more flexible and open to change; and they have a wider range of coping skills (Staudinger et al. 1993)
‘Resilience’ then refers to a value, a principle of happiness [of the soul] that is exercised through living in the world with others in ways that are fulfilling and purposeful. The purpose of ‘resilient’ people is practical: that is to live successful and fulfilled lives, and to change the world. Therefore, resilience is not an individual psychological ‘quality’ or ‘commodity’. It is a way of living with others in the world (Kēpa, 2010).

What makes a community liveable for older Māori?

Older Māori in Ukutoia and Tokoroa talked about important aspects of community living:

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The people

Aroha te Tangata “Love the people”

- Aroha to our tipuna, whānau, kaumātua, kuia, mokopuna, and our parents as the keepers of te reo [Māori]:

“it’s an honour that I can go ... awhi[[embrace]]5 my mum. That I can say, you know, I’m going to look after [you], you know, she imparts, she gives me so much of her knowledge and whakapapa,[[genealogy]]. ... [S]he has reverted back to being a young child, but that’s awesome because she can remember things so clearly, you know” (Ukutoia)

“There was a question [in the study] about how much you earnt, and the first question is, do you earn dadada, and my answer was I am making ends meet. The second one [asked about my financial situation], ten years ago, da da da. And I wrote, oh, I was comfortable. So it looked that I was worse off now

5 Translation was provided by Pine Harrison
than I was ten years ago. But in actual fact I’m not worse off. What I’m actually doing is that my money ... I share it with my whānau. ...So in that respect it looked as if I was worse off. ... But I’m more well off ... cause I share it with my kids, and with my mokos for their education, to feed and clothe them, you know, so and that’s, I’m better off, you know” (Ukutoia)

Ngā Hau e Whā – Open to the four winds

- **It is important that we can be open to all: to mix with all, young and old, and different cultures:**

  “Open to all! Open to Ngā Hau e whā [[The four winds]]. Have our single parents, or single tamariki [[children]] or rangatahi [[older children]] here. It is unique to mix.” (Ukutoia)

  “[O]ne of the other things I’d just like to be able to say at this point is, um, with children growing up in this community, I actually think that any child who is born and bred in Tokoroa, are privileged children. Because they grow up with all the different ethnic groups that are here that we have here in Tokoroa. And, um, they grow up, they go to school together, they play together, they sleep – they do everything together.” (Tokoroa)

Whenua

*Our land, our mana, our marae, and our urupā*

- **Our marae: our awhi, our place of belonging, and sense of purpose:**

  “Without this awhi [[embracing]] of our marae we have no, this is the only place we can stand and talk our, make our mana [[prestige]]. Nobody can come in that gate. Only us as Māori to say what we want to say. Nobody can come in, the government can’t come in here and say ‘do this, you do that, you do this’. We say taihoa, you stay out there, we powhiri[[welcome]] you and you come in under our grounds. But it’s because this is what this place is, a safety zone for us as Māori to say our piece.” (Ukutoia)

  “...[K]a eke te tangata ki te taumata o te kaumātua a [when a person reaches the stage of becoming an elder]], your whole life changes. ... I became more involved with the marae and the iwi back home, and now I’ve kind of taken a leadership role, for my, for the hapū. And that’s been a huge challenge, but ... you get a lot of purpose, personal satisfaction out of it, you’ve got something to get up in the morning for, and live life for, and be happy with what you’re doing.” (Tokoroa)

- **Urupā: A place to grieve for and commune with the dead: A place to stop in and have a kōrero to the old people, and a place to unload and to feel good.**

Discussion about urupā in Tokoroa (From notes, no audio recording):
P1: Talks about driving up north regularly to the urupā to see her husband. She takes a blanket, sits down and talks to him, and sleeps there overnight. His relatives see her van, and invite her to their houses, but she refuses, she wants to stay with him.

P2: Says she was recently in the family urupā with a three year old who was being a bit hōhā [impatient]. The girl laid down on her grandfather’s grave with a blanket and she slept soundly for three hours, which was very unusual for her! She thought to herself that even after death her grandfather was looking after his mokopuna!

P4: Talks about going to the urupā to ask the old people for advice. After being robbed by tenants, she went home to the farm and saw a ruru [morepork] sitting on the fence during the day. Its head was shaped like an ake [[fist]], and its eyes followed her around, and its head twisted. She knew something was wrong, so she went to the urupā, to her grandmother’s grave to cry and to ask for help to sort out her problems.

P3: Says that we need to understand that for Māori death is not about fear. Her family urupā is new (from her grandfather on), and they have encouraged the family to spend a lot of time there. It is a joyful place, ‘not tapu tapu’.

Kua Ngāro Ke - Dealing with the fact that “We are lost people”

- Racism and poverty:

  “Māoris don’t live and have never been in an ideal situation, we’ve always had to struggle, we’ve always had to make our, you know, dig our gardens, make our kai, keep our house clean, and feed our kids, so we don’t know any other way if there is a perfect way for us to grow old, what is it? You know, we’re too busy being who we are …” (Ukutoia)

- The loss of te reo:

  P1: [M]y friends, most of them are Māori, but they don’t speak Māori, so it’s been really difficult. I spent two years at the wānanga learning the lingo and then I had no one … to kōrero with. And … our mokos, well one lot of mokopunas they go to kohanga reo [[language nest]] and, you know, kura. They’re fluent! And they won’t even speak Māori with us.

  P2: They probably think nana [[grandma]] and koro [[grandpa]] are dumb!

  P1: And I tried to encourage them to kōrero with me, but they won’t. And I know that it’s a real disadvantage, I get whakamā [[shy]] sometimes when I go in and hear other people speaking Māori and I think, well, look at me, here I am, an old lady and I can’t even speak fluently. So, I just clam up a lot of the time. Yeah.

P3: We’re virtually the lost generation aren’t we?

(Group discussion, Tokoroa)
• **Grief. It is hard to be separated from those back home, and to lose your parents, and your partner:**

“One thing important to talk about is widowhood. The pouaru has found it to be a time of great loneliness, being without one’s partner or spouse. It’s about not having someone to bring you a cup of tea in the morning. And waking up alone in the morning, disorientated and feeling around, there is no one in the bed beside you. … My best friends now are the toaster, jug, and the microwave. Not the stove, the microwave. Because that way I don’t have to plan a menu for kai. ... If I want to eat good kai I invite myself to someone else’s house!” (Tokoroa)

_Mātauranga Tauiwi – Negotiating foreign knowledge_

• **Money is difficult - Especially for a pouaru (widow) going from two pensions to one:**

P1: [Y]ou know, we got to learn to be damn good budgeters, because we only have a dollar, as we are going to make our kai go to two dollars. So, you know, that’s how we are, that’s how Māori is, they will spend a dollar to put two dollars worth of kai on their plate.

P2: Ah, yeah, pick some pūhās, [[sow thistle]] and, yeah, yeah (Ukutoia)

• **Household maintenance is particularly difficult if you are living alone, and living on a low income:**

K: One thing I struggle with is as a woman living on my own is maintaining my home. Things like painting, replacing rotten timber etc., these are all very difficult to do and very expensive. I hear WINZ will help, but imagine it is repayable (chorus of ’yes’ from other people in the room). So that is something that is quite hard (Tokoroa)

• **Not having much money also makes it hard to stay warm. This is particularly an issue in Tokoroa:**

P1: I wondered if I was feeling colder because I was getting older.

P2: This has been a very cold winter, more cold than we’ve had in awhile.

P3: I have been getting around in my house like a bushman, all dressed up in a hat, jerseys etc. swandri, to keep warm.

P4: I know what you mean

P5: I’ve been coming to work with a hat on, just to keep warm (Tokoroa)

• **There is also a lack of appropriate housing for older Māori:**

“Retirement villages: As a Māori, [they] are not for me” (Tokoroa)
It is important to have enough enjoyable things to do each day. In Tokoroa, people were generally positive about this. The people in Ukutoia, however, feel that there needs to be more activities for older Māori:

P1: I am concerned about the elderly here. I feel that there is not enough entertainment for them.
P2: Kia Ora
P1: … [C]ause the Island people, I don’t know whether you are aware, but they have started a club over here at the library. They’ve got funding, yeah the Cook Islanders, they have one going on there, as well, got funding through the library and Housing New Zealand. So, yeah, sort of thought, so, Māori, there’s enough of us, so what do we do? Are we hanging on the limbs waiting for it to break?
… I often wondered if perhaps if we put on a day for the elderly and perhaps just had a ‘golden coin’ collection, and just see how we can bring them in, too, cause sometimes things do happen like that, you know, where they become interested, too, and put some kai on for them, or afternoon tea, you know.(Ukutoia)
What vision do older Māori have for the future?

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<th>The ideal society for older Māori</th>
<th>The ideal society for everyone</th>
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<tr>
<td>[Māori] Whenua</td>
<td>Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land, country, authority, control, power</td>
<td>Jobs, pensions, WINZ [money]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tangata whenua</td>
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<td>Whakapapa, tipuna, kaumātua, tamariki, mokopuna</td>
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<td>Te reo Māori me ngā tikanga</td>
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<td>Marae, urupā, wānanga, whakapapa</td>
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<td>Māori self-determination</td>
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<td>Tangata whenua [status], whakapapa, mana whenua</td>
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<td>A purpose to live, Raukawa, Te Reo, Wānanga</td>
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Participants’ recommendations
These are some of the specific recommendations made by older Māori who participated in the research.

**Ukutoia**
- Good housing around Ruapotaka Marae
- Council returns the land around the Marae
- More activities for older Māori people

**Tokoroa**
- Knowledge sharing Hui – WINZ, health services, Raukawa
- Whānau paid for caring for parents/relatives

The way forward
The Resilient Ageing in Place project is part of a longer-term programme of research on ageing in New Zealand conducted by Dr Janine Wiles at the University of Auckland. The results of this research will be used to inform local community groups, councils, and policy-makers about the concerns and priorities of older Māori in our two study sites.
Special thanks

Special thanks to all the participants who agreed to share their thoughts and stories with us. Thanks also to all the people and organisations that assisted us to recruit participants, and organise and facilitate focus groups and feedback meetings. In particular, thanks to everyone at Raukawa Trust Board, for helping us to set up focus groups and hold feedback meetings in Tokoroa. Particular thanks go to Julie Barnett and Waiora Smith for running focus groups for us, and to Bernice Kaponga for her help setting up feedback meetings. Also thanks to Georgie Thompson at Ruapotaka marae for all her help organising our research meetings and feedback meetings in Ukutoia, and to Te Kaanga Skipper for facilitating the focus group in Ukutoia. Finally thanks to Pine Harrison for his translation and to project team members Professor Ngaire Kerse, Dr Mere Kēpa, Dr Liz Kiata, and Dr Jeanne Reeve. Thanks to the Health Research Council of New Zealand for providing funding for this project.

References: