

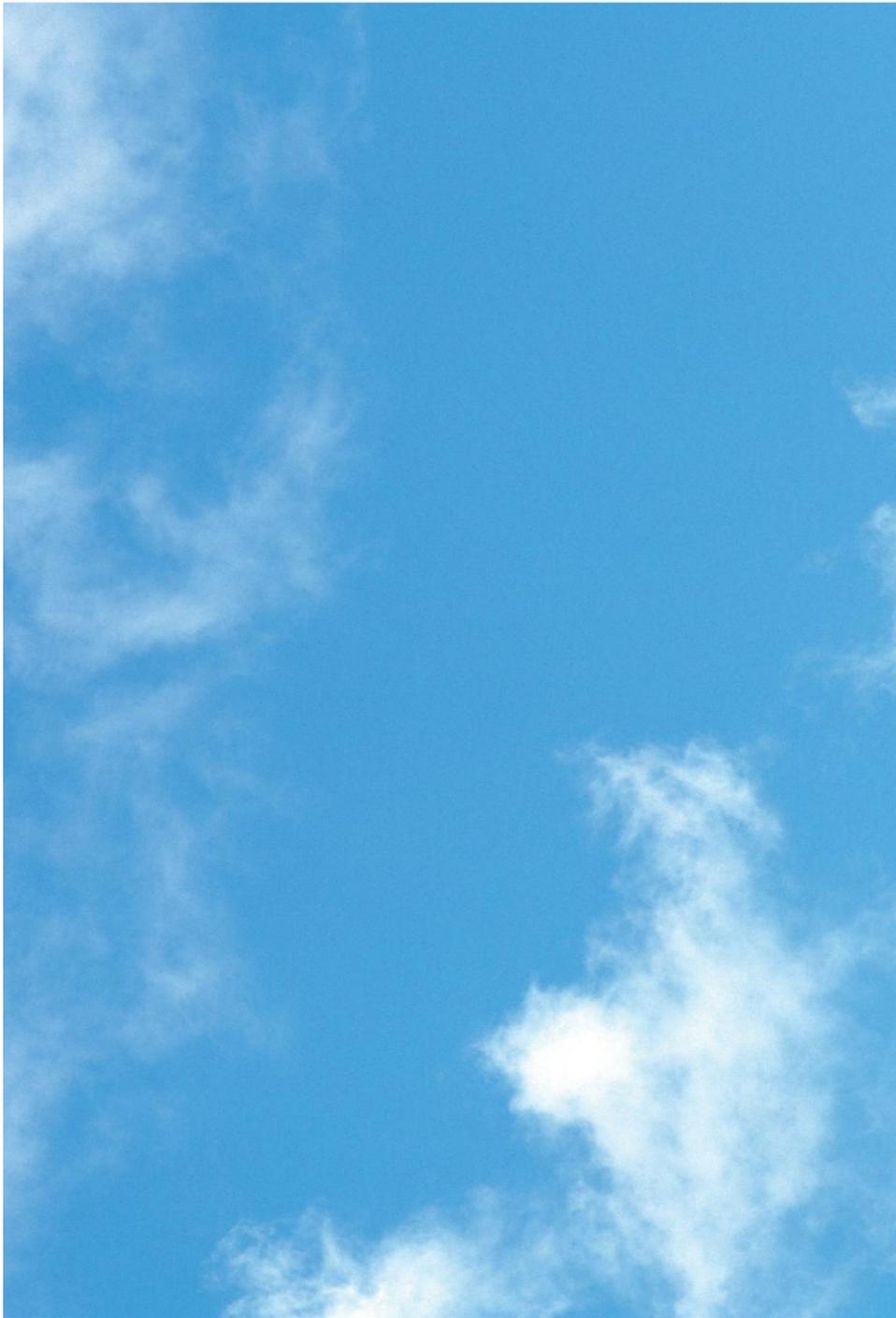


THE UNIVERSITY  
OF AUCKLAND

FACULTY OF MEDICAL  
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# Resilient Ageing in Place

## Tokoroa Report & Recommendations



# Resilient Ageing in Place

Social and Community Health, School of Population Health

2011 | Introduction & Principles | Resilient Ageing in Place

## 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 Tokoroa 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
6. Incorporate **best-practice national and international guidelines**, including principles endorsed by the United Nations, World Health Organisation, New Zealand's Positive Ageing Strategy and local government commitments in relation to older people.



## 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. This ideal, *community living*, is referred to by the government and policy-makers as 'ageing in place'. So if community living is the ideal, then what makes communities liveable for older New Zealanders?

We asked older people in our two study sites, Glen Innes/Ukutoia<sup>1</sup>, Auckland, and Tokoroa what they thought about these questions. This report provides a summary of the key findings from the focus groups and interviews held in Tokoroa. The study participants were recruited through local community groups and community networks. As well as interviews and mixed focus groups we also held three focus groups with older Māori people, a group with older Samoan people, and two focus groups with older Cook Islanders living in Tokoroa. Many of the focus groups were facilitated by older people from the community.

## 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 goes "old age ain't no place for sissies"<sup>2</sup>, 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."<sup>3</sup> After a lifetime of learning how to deal with the good and the bad, older people are amongst the most 'resilient' members of our community. Research shows that while older people often experience more significant hardship than younger people, they also have a greater range of 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<sup>4</sup>. So we believe that we need communities, and community living policies that *value, protect, and enhance* this resilience.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Quote attributed to Henry Louis Mencken

<sup>3</sup> Hamarat et al, 2002, pg. 365

<sup>4</sup> Staudinger et al, 1993

## What makes a community liveable for older people?

People talked about four important aspects of community living:

<b>My home</b>	<b>My neighbourhood</b>
<b>My community</b>	<b>My life</b>

### *My home*

Most people in Tokoroa own their own homes, and said that they would like to stay living in them as long as possible. However, some people also said that their home is starting to feel a little bit big for them to look after:

**Eunice:** [I]f only you could sort of wriggle your nose and your house would shrink, it would be lovely, wouldn't it?

**Rose:** Yes, yes, exactly, Eunice

**Nancy:** Unfortunately, those extra bedrooms, come and take them away. I don't need them. You can have them!

**Eunice:** Yes just leave me with this little home

**Rose:** Yes, it would save you having to even pack up! (Focus group discussion)

Not everyone agreed, however, that having a smaller house would be better. People with large whānau in particular, were keen to make sure that they had plenty of space available if their children or grandchildren want or need to come and stay. Those who own their own homes also struggled with the costs of home maintenance. Several people in Tokoroa asked if funding could be made available to help older people complete household repairs:

If we could get a help because my roof is starting to leak. You know, this is only a thought. For a way to help us because our pension money really is not enough. Or maybe we could look at some coconut leaves for roofing (*laughs*). (Cook Island men's focus group)

Household maintenance is particularly difficult if you are living on your own:

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 (Māori focus group)

Not everyone owns their own home, and those who are still renting said that the lack of security can be a stress for them:

My life in Tokoroa, it is not so good. It's not so good because we live in a rental home. In the past, we have seen sale signs indicating that they were

selling the property. Maybe that is why I have many sicknesses, too many problems, stress. It's because of rental properties. Now we have to move. Because of the lack of opportunities, my mind is not settled to one place.  
(Cook Island men's focus group)

People had mixed views about rest-homes and retirement homes. Many people said that they like the retirement villages in Putaruru (Rangiuru), and would like something similar in Tokoroa. Most people said that they would like to avoid having to go into a rest-home if possible; however, many people said that if the time came that they couldn't care for themselves, then they accepted this might be necessary. Several people said that they would go into a rest-home to avoid being a burden to their children.

The people in the Samoan group were particularly anxious about going into a rest-home, because they said that they weren't sure if there would be culturally appropriate care available for them:

**Mati:** [W]e now have a rest-home here. The question that has arisen is, are there Samoan girls, are there Cook Island girls there? ... Who is there to care for me? The situation for us [who are ageing] is very difficult. Who will care for me? Who will bathe me? (Samoan focus group)

Although people had different views about what sort of housing arrangements would be acceptable to them, almost everyone agreed that it is important that older people have choices about where they want to live:

**Joy:** I believe that for me to age in place, and be resilient, I need to stay in this house. And so, as I age, I would expect things to be put in that would enable me to do that. So that you age where you want to be. Now some people might want to go to a rest home. Some people might want to go to a retirement village. Some people might want to shift out of their home and their town and go to the beach. Or something like that. But it's where, I think the ageing in place, to me, the important bit is where I want to be (Interview)

### *My neighbourhood*

Most people said that they are happy with their neighbourhoods and their neighbours:

**Jane:** My community is my fanau, my family. Because I can't drive - I only can drive my husband up the wall (*group laughs*), but my neighbours offered to drive me anywhere when Steven is not there. (Samoan focus group)

Several people talked about their neighbourhood as their extended 'home':

**Rose:** And it's part of your home isn't it? You know it's like an extension of your own

**Joyce:** It is, it's like your own little community." (Focus group discussion)

Many people said that their neighbours help to look after their place when they are away, and that they are very grateful for the support that they receive from them. As well as having good neighbours, easy access to community facilities was also considered to be important. A number of people said that they feel like Tokoroa generally has good community services, which means that the overall quality of most neighbourhoods is high:

**Laurie:** You know the services are good. The rubbish picked up every week. We've got a recycle program here that every fortnight they come along and take all the recycling stuff.

**Jane:** Which I think is a real blessing.

**Interviewer:** Roads and footpaths are in good repair. Majority of the people keep their places tidy.

**Jane:** Oh, well around here they, yes.

**Laurie:** The street trees make it attractive in the summer, well in the winter time too but more so in the summer time with the street trees, it's quite an attractive sort of place to live. (Interview)

Many people were concerned about mobility and how easy it is to get to shops and health care services. Several people said that while they are okay while they can still drive, that they are worried about how they will get around if or when they lose their license. A number of people said that there needs to be better infrastructure for mobility scooters, including improved pavement quality, and more crossings, parking and power points for scooters.

Several people also said that they are concerned about crime in their neighbourhood; although many people also said that there is too much focus in the media on levels of crime in the town. Those who have experienced crime said that they have found the police very helpful in assisting them to deal with it.

### *My community*

Overall, most people said that they love living in Tokoroa and wouldn't want to move anywhere else. As one person explained, this is because many older people have been living here a long time, and were involved in 'building' the town together:

**Bernie:** As well as your home, the neighbourhood or our community is our best asset in Tokoroa. I think for any of us that have lived here for a long time, in the old days, if I can put it that way, fifty odd years, um, when Tokoroa was being born, um, the local residents ...all those people ... clubbed together and they worked together as a unit to um, build the playgrounds, the play equipment, ... helped to build the churches and

**Merle:** Swimming pools.

**Bernie:** Everything, yes, everything that the community needed, people mucked in and they helped everybody. ... Everybody knew everybody and they participated in making the community ... just a wonderful place to be. (Focus group discussion)

As well as feeling that Tokoroa has a strong sense of community spirit, many people said that they also like the fact that the community is very multi-cultural:

[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. (Māori focus group)

Most people said that they would also like to stay in the community because it feels 'familiar' and 'comfortable' to them:

**Bruce:** I've been giving it a lot of thought actually, because all my whānau are in [another region] ... but I think you've gotta be comfortable where you're at. ... [So] when I get down the track further may[be] there is that drawing to go back to the whānau and whatever, ... but right at the moment I'm happy here, so, why would I want to move? ... I mean, I think it's important that we get comfortable. [W]e need to stay in our comfort, rather than be uprooted and planted somewhere else, somewhere foreign (Focus group).

Several people said that they had moved away, but they had come back, because Tokoroa feels familiar:

**Joyce:** [W]ell that's why we came back. Because we still had friends here and things like that. And it was just like shifting into a nice pair of comfortable shoes! You just carried on! It was just in a different house! (Focus group discussion)

## *My life*

Lots of people said that they feel like ageing is a 'state of mind,' and that they don't feel old:

**Marion:** You're talking about your body changing. But inside you don't change, do you?

**Harry:** No.

**Alfred:** No.

**Marion:** And you get quite a shock sometimes. You think, gosh blimey, where's all that white hair come from?

**Olive:** (*Laughter*)

**Alfred:** Yeah.

**Olive:** Like these old hands and things!

**Alfred:** Yeah, who's that looking at me?

**Marion:** And I tried to explain that to the kids.

**Harry:** [And] that little old lady helping me across the road is my wife!  
(*Everyone laughs*)

**Marion:** I've still got a wisdom tooth coming through, and I'm thinking well when that comes through maybe then I'll be grown up!

(*Everyone laughs*) (Focus group discussion)

Several people said that they think that there has been a large shift from their parents generation to their own generation in terms of how people feel about the idea of old age. While sixty used to be considered old, now most people still consider

it to be pretty young! Being positive, and getting out of the house and doing things you enjoy are seen as the key to ageing well:

**Harry:** You can't just sit down and say oh well, I've had it, I'm too old. You've got to get up and do something. (Focus group discussion)

Many people said that Tokoroa has lots of great activities for older people, and that it is really important to keep active, and to stay part of the community:

**Colleen:** Yes, you've got to get out of your home. Yeah, cause you know, somebody said to me the other day, oh, how are you enjoying Senior Citz? I said I'm enjoying it for one specific reason, you're not sitting in a square room, watching a square box. (Focus group discussion)

Many people talked about the volunteer work that they do in the community, and people in the Māori focus groups talked about the excitement as well as hard work associated with taking on the new role of kaumātua/kuia:

[K]a eke te tangata ki te taumata o te kaumātuatanga [[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. (Māori focus group)

As well as activities and new roles, good relationships with friends were considered to be really important:

When you are lonely, you only just have to pick the phone up and call someone to come over and stay. And then you call your team of friends in your embroidery group. (Cook Island women's group)

Family are also very important to lots of people. Several people, especially in the Cook Island and Samoan groups talked about the importance of spending time with your children to make sure that you tell them your stories before you pass on:

Hey! Listen, while I remember, to all of you sitting around this table, you have a legacy to leave back to your children. Talk to your children, tell them your story as to how you came to Tokoroa. What you did in those days. Tell it before the shovel makes that noise! <sup>5</sup> (Cook Island men's group)

People also talked about the importance of preparing for death. Several people in the Māori and Samoan focus groups talked about how important it is to let your spouse or your children know where you want to be buried (e.g. on the home marae, or back in the islands, or in Tokoroa). A lot of people also talked about making sure that you have organised the financial side of your funeral.

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<sup>5</sup> Translators note: A Cook Island slang/joke - a polite way of saying when somebody dies, you hear the shovel digging into the soil to cover the grave. It is called *parara te tuapara*

Money and finances was a big topic of discussion. Many people said that there is a need for more financial support for older people to help them out with home maintenance, electricity costs, food costs, and funeral and burial plot expenses. They also said that they would like more respect when they go to Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) offices:

**Bruce:** I think respect. ...[T]hey're not dealing with unemployed teenagers, straight out of school, they're dealing with people who have basically grown up here all their lives, paid taxes, done their dues

**Jack:** Yeah

**Bruce:** and, so there should be some respect -

**Jack:** Yes

**Bruce:** - for the older people - rather than, like you say, the smugness and if you don't ask you don't get it.

**Jack:** Yes, yes.

**Joy:** Mmm, yes (Focus group discussion)

As well as greater respect, there was also a request for a separate queue for older people at WINZ offices, and a mobile service that could go to people's homes when they are too ill to travel:

[W]hen you go to social welfare right? You stand in that queue. You would spend half a day in that office. And then, it was cold and there you go waiting down there in your old age, waiting for someone to serve you. This is very important for these policymaker people to know about. If we can have a separate queue for elderly people. As soon as they see elderlies standing there, they would then come straight away and serve them. Just leave the young ones to stand in the queue. (Cook Island men's group)

Finally people also talked about care services, and the need for more financial assistance and training for family/whānau who are looking after older people in the community:

**Jane:** Another issue is that there is no training of workers, or our children. I have a child who should be trained so that (she/he) can handle (care) for me.

**Mati:** This is a very important issue. So if there is an elderly person within the family, there should be training (for the family) to provide care for the elderly person

**Jane:** [The body] is hurt because their bodies are soft/weak and if you grab her government [workers] will come [and see] that you are bruised all over, or your next door neighbour will see your bruised body (Samoan focus group)

#### References:

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## Participants' recommendations

These are some of the specific recommendations made by older people who participated in the research in Tokoroa.

### *Activities for older people*

- There needs to be more activities for older people – including a Senior Net or similar computer group.
- Older people need a building downtown like a gym, with a social space where they can rest, and plan activities.
- More concrete walkways so that people can exercise in places where there is sure footing, especially around the lake

### *Home maintenance*

- Low-income older people need financial assistance with housing maintenance.
- A priority list for local tradespeople would be useful.

### *Council*

- The Council needs to be more aware of the needs of the older population
- Older Cook Islanders would like opportunities to have more input into Council decisions

### *Housing options*

- There is a need for affordable retirement units for older people – Like in Putaruru (Rangiuru). To rent and to buy.
- Maybe there should be a rest-home for Samoan and Pacific older people.
- There should be culturally appropriate staff in rest-homes.

### *Mobility*

- A bus service would be useful for those who cannot drive.
- Subsidise mobility scooters and wheelchairs for older people.
- There is a need for parking spaces for scooters, especially outside the supermarket.
- Supermarket aisles should be wide enough for scooters; and wheelchairs/scooters could be available at supermarket.
- The Council should enforce bylaw about cars parking on pavements – this is dangerous for walkers and people on scooters.
- All mobility scooters should have horns.
- There is a need for more crossings for older people and people on scooters, especially on the main road.

### *Income*

- Older people living on low incomes need financial assistance with the costs of electricity, food, home maintenance and repairs, and burial plots.
- Older people deserve more respect from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) staff

- Need a separate queue for older people, and mobile service for people who can't come to a WINZ office.
- Older Cook Islanders need an advocate at WINZ who can speak their language.

### **Information**

- Need more education programmes for older people so that they know what they are entitled to, in particular Work and Income NZ, and health care entitlements.
- A 'social register' where you could 'ring up and get a solution for the problem that you're facing right now' would be a useful way to tap into each other's knowledge.

### **Health care and home care**

- Older people need more information about entitlements to home care services.
- Family/whānau giving up work to care for older relatives need a carers payment.
- Provide training for family members providing care for older relatives at home.
- There is a need for a specialist in old age care at the hospital.
- Tokoroa needs a hospice.
- Home care should be better – More hours and higher quality.

### **Other**

- Connect young people eg senior school students with older people by having them visit rest-homes
- There is a need for more clothes and shoe shops.
- The Samoan hall needs better heating.

## **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 people in Tokoroa.

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