

# Auckland Council Local Board Plans

By *Kevin Lamb*, Chief Executive Officer, *Age Concern Auckland*

It is that time in local government cycles when the *Local Boards* begin to renew their *Local Board Plans* for the next three years. This is always a tense time whilst those of us who work in the social support sector look to see where their priorities will be.

It may seem overly simplistic, but the truth of the matter remains, if there is no prioritisation within the *Local Plan* an issue is unlikely to receive much focus when it comes to preparing work plans or, importantly, when allocated funding.

I have spent some time of late talking to a number of the Local Boards across Auckland trying to improve the visibility and prioritisation of the needs of older people within *Local Plans*. My starting point has always been to


look back at the last *Local Plan* to identify where improvements could be made. It's a thankless task. The long and short of it is that improvements wouldn't be difficult. Unfortunately this is due to the current paucity of emphasis currently placed on older people.

If I use *Waitemata Local Board* as an example – and I have no particular reason for doing so other than they were the last I spoke to. I could replace them with any other and the results would be much the same.

I took a forensic look at the current *Local Board Plan*, searching for any hint that older people were being prioritised and jotted down every mention I found. It wasn't a long list. There are two occasions where

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the phrase “seniors, children, young people and families” is used, which appears to me to be just an alternative way of saying ‘everybody’. Then there is a rather oblique reference to people “living longer”. No comment on what if any alterations to planning this may bring about, just a passing statement. It’s all a bit depressing really.

When I repeated the process looking for mentions of children or young people or youth or families with children, the list is a lot longer. They get lots of bold statements such as “children and young people are thriving” or “putting children and young people first”.

Now, don’t get me wrong, I hold no issue with supporting children and young people. We should do, they represent the future generation and

we want them to thrive, to grow, and develop – all good stuff. But does it need to be at the exclusion of older people? Can we not have one and the other rather than one or the other?

If you look at the areas demographic change you can see why a strong emphasis is made for supporting children and young people. Over the past decade the number of children living in the Waitemata area has increased by 23%. With growth numbers like that of course we should be prioritising their needs. However, over the same time frame, in the same area, the number of over-65s has increased by 50%.

It is important to remember that the majority of older people in Auckland, and particular in our central suburbs, are totally fine. They face the same challenges we all do getting older, but they are involved,

### DHB Region Population Estimates (by Age Group)

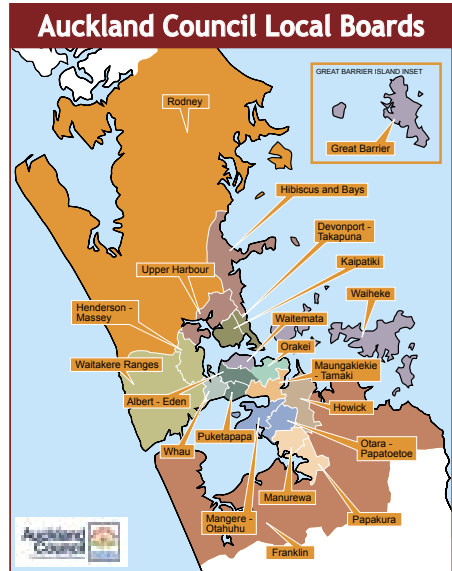
Age Group	Waitemata DHB			Auckland DHB			Counties Manukau DHB		
	2006	2016	Change	2006	2016	Change	2006	2016	Change
<b>0 - 14 years</b>	107,500	116,100	8.0 %	78,900	84,100	6.6 %	115,500	122,200	5.8 %
<b>15 - 39 years</b>	180,700	206,100	14.1 %	183,300	222,200	21.2 %	165,600	193,400	16.8 %
<b>40 - 64 years</b>	161,300	189,600	17.5 %	125,600	146,500	16.6 %	133,900	159,300	19.0 %
<b>65+ years</b>	55,100	78,900	43.2 %	40,400	54,500	34.9 %	398,800	594,400	49.2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>504,700</b>	<b>290,700</b>	<b>17.0 %</b>	<b>428,300</b>	<b>507,200</b>	<b>18.4 %</b>	<b>454,800</b>	<b>534,200</b>	<b>17.5 %</b>

Source: NZ.Stat / Stats NZ

supported, active. I don't worry too much about them. On the whole they're okay.

What concerns me is the total lack of recognition placed on those older people who aren't fine. It's the 20% of all older people who experience severe loneliness and isolation that concern me. It's the 10% of all over-65s who experience elder abuse and neglect that I'm troubled by.

When I challenge Local Boards about this the response is pretty much always the same, along the lines of providing good facilities and nice events. I remind them that these actions, albeit laudable, are also targeting the majority of older people who fall into the 'okay category', the proactive engagers. This doesn't address the issues, challenges, and needs of sizeable minority who have neither the support, capability, nor confidence to engage. It is these people we should be focusing our efforts on and prioritising in *Local Board Plans*.



We need to not just focus on those things that are easy to do, that are in front of our eyes or that are in response to those with the loudest voice but should be actively seeking solutions to supporting those who exist on the margins of our community. Hopefully the latest round of *Local Board Plans* will begin to show some recognition of this. We can but hope.

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