

REPORT ON THE SEMINAR: HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN AUCKLAND

MARCH 2015

The Auckland District Council of Social Services (ADCOSS) held a seminar on the topic of Housing Options for Older People in Auckland of 13 March 2015 and 120 people attended. They came from a variety of social, housing and health organisations, including District Health Boards, Auckland Council, government agencies, not for profits and interested individuals.

There were three main speakers:

Dr Charles Crothers (AUT): demographics and Auckland's ageing population.
Dr Deborah Levy (University of Auckland Business School): Financial issues.
Terry Foster (Abbeyfield, provider of housing for older people): giving an overview of the housing issues.

There were also group sessions that worked through some current issues relating to this wider issue.

This report attempts to synthesise the information, data and ideas presented by speakers and the opinions of the groups relating to key actions that should be carried out.

1. Key points:

- a) **The Auckland Housing market** is complex and depends on many factors relating to demand and supply. Demand is affected by income and wealth, age, geography, ethnicity and personal decisions about lifestyle. Supply is affected by the lack of government financial investment in housing over the past six years and more recent housing policies (e.g. Special Housing Areas), banking decisions on mortgage rates, birthrates, migration, local government decisions on the supply of land and concerns about affordable housing.
- b) **Auckland's demographics is changing.** First, there is a high demand for housing created by high migration rates with most migrants settling in Auckland. Second, at the same time, the population is starting to age. As the post war baby boomers age the demand for special housing for the elderly will increase. By the year 2043 the population of those aged 65 and over will be nearly half a million.
- c) **There is no up-to-date research** on housing options for older people. With the current interest in the issue of affordable housing, the needs of older people have been neglected. The longitudinal study of Ageing

carried out by Massey University in 2013 showed “...older people in this (Auckland) sample are increasingly facing a future with less housing and income security. Many worry about their personal security; over half of the sample is lonely and depression is present for a significant minority; too many experience everyday discrimination because of their age; and a smaller proportion cannot visit shops, services and friends as freely as they would like. ...Around 40

per cent care for someone with a long-term illness, disability or frailty.”

There is also no strategy to face the rapid demographic changes taking place in the Auckland Region. One of council’s priorities for research is to inquire into the implications of rapid demographic changes taking place. This needs to be implemented in order to assist in the development of a strategic framework on housing needs of older people in the region.

2) Housing Options

The following options were raised and analysed:

Housing Option	Comments	Availability
Council housing for Older People	Sometimes called ‘pensioner housing’. They are provided in West, North and South Auckland	Limited. Conditions apply.
Housing NZ, Housing for Older People	HNZ bought all the ‘pensioner flats’ from the old Auckland City Council	Limited. Conditions apply.
Housing NZ state housing		Limited. Conditions apply

Social Housing	Run by NGOs & Churches	Not available
Cooperative housing	Not in NZ	Not available
Intergenerational Housing	Not in NZ	Not available
Private rental housing/apartments	Expensive. Competition from other renters	Available
Boarding/rooming houses	Usually one room of inferior quality	Limited
Retirement Villages	High quality Expensive	Available

3) Other issues raised

Workshops raised a number of other issues:

- a) Housing needs for people with mental disorders including dementia should be addressed.
- b) The government and Auckland Council need to coordinate the preparation of a strategy for dealing with housing for older people.
- c) Need for greater protection of tenants. Legislative change is necessary.
- d) Introduction of long-term leases for tenants in NZ.
- e) Need to increase the options available in Auckland including intergenerational housing (good examples in Spain, Finland, the Netherlands and Germany) and cooperative housing (good examples in the UK).
- f) Loneliness is a major problem facing many older people living in all forms of housing.
- g) There are no emergency refuges or respite care for older people.
- h) An emergency line is needed for older people.
- i) Need for social housing and retirement villages for older Asian migrants of Indian, Chinese and Korean origin.
- j) Need for some purpose-built residential care facilities based on excellent overseas models.
- k) More community owned facilities like Abbeyfield are needed.

- l) Research is needed on the numbers of older vulnerable people with mental health problems facing housing difficulties or living in hospital facilities.

4) Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- a) That ongoing and coordinated research is needed into the housing needs of older people. (Central government, Auckland Council, District Health Boards, University of Auckland and other tertiary educational institutions, Iwi and community-based & church-based research organisations)

- b) That a comprehensive strategy should be drawn up for improving the housing options available for older people in Auckland. (Central government, Auckland Council, District Health Boards, Iwi with the support of community based organisations.)

- c) A Strategy should include the following:
 - i. Ensure there is an adequate housing supply for older persons.
 - ii. Better regulate the private rental sector to have healthy homes and sustainable tenancies.
 - iii. Ensure a range of housing services to assist older people to make informed choices.
 - iv. Ensure a range of options to suit the diverse housing and aged care needs of older people reaching retirement.
 - v. Look at new ways of funding housing projects e.g. Social housing bonds, Betterment taxes, Inclusionary zoning, Public Private Partnerships.

- d) That an advocacy group, coordinated by ADCOSS, be set up to press for improved housing options for older people. (ADCOSS)

- e) That all Special Housing Area developments be required to provide a percentage of affordable and specially designed housing for older people. (Auckland Council and appropriate central government agency).

- f) That funding be made available for social housing organisations and NGOs for setting up emergency rental housing for older people. (Central government).