

# Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa Inc.

## Ageing Strategy 2018

### Submission

Living Streets Aotearoa Inc. (LSA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Ageing Strategy.

### Terminology

LSA notes that Age Concern prefers the term “older people”. LSA would recommend that the Ageing Strategy refers to ‘older people’ rather than “seniors”.

LSA will use the term “older people” in this submission.

Older people can be defined as people 65+, however it should be recognised that chronological age is just a number. Some people may experience the impact of ageing from age 55, while others may not experience the impacts of ageing until 75 years of age or beyond.

### Demographics

The discussion document provides useful information about the projected number of people aged 65+ in 2038 and details of the ethnic diversity of this population.

However there needs to be greater analysis of this population in narrower age bands, possibly 65-74, 75-84, 85+, and possibly considering the likely increasing number of those over 100 years of age. Evidence suggests that the needs of the older population may change significantly as older people move through each of these age bands<sup>1</sup>, and some may experience the impacts earlier<sup>2</sup>. For example the discussion document suggests that 1 in 4 65+ may still be in employment, but how many will still be in employment at 75+? It should also be acknowledged that people age at different rates so these age bands are only indicative. This will be important in targeting appropriate support for people at different stages of aging.

### Checklist for age friendly cities and communities

LSA considers the World Health Organization’s *Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities*<sup>3</sup> provides essential guidance for developing an age-friendly strategy. See the Appendix for WHO’s recommendations on *Outdoor space and buildings* and *Transportation*, the areas of particular interest to LSA.

### Slips, trips and falls

Falls are the greatest cause of injury among older people<sup>4</sup>. These can occur both in the home and in the community. Poorly maintained, cracked, uneven and poorly lit footpaths contribute to the risk and fear of injury among older people.<sup>5,6,7</sup> Funding footpath maintenance throughout our cities and

towns will be critical to enabling older people to continue to live in and participate in community activities. Ensuring new and renewed footpaths and public spaces meet or exceed the standards in the *Pedestrian planning and design guide*<sup>8</sup> is essential.

Footpath maintenance is undertaken by local government so a plan to engage and encourage local government to increase and improve maintenance is important. LSA is pleased to note that the 2018 Government Policy Statement on Land Transport<sup>9</sup> includes funding assistance for footpath maintenance for the first time, at a rate equivalent to the rest of the local road corridor.

Responses from older people in Hamilton highlight their concerns about footpath maintenance and safety.<sup>10</sup>

*“Uneven footpaths are often caused by cobblestones and tree roots, making pavements dangerous for pedestrians.”* (p.14)

*“Walkways and footpaths need improvement – more refuge islands on busy roads to help older people cross more safely.”* (p.28)

The minimum standards which should be a starting point for ensuring age-friendly road and footpath design should be those set out in the *Pedestrian planning and design guide*<sup>8</sup> and RTS14.<sup>11</sup>

## Road safety

There is evidence that pedestrians aged 80+ are the most “at risk” group of pedestrian road users,<sup>12</sup> twice as vulnerable as pedestrians in the 70-79 age bracket and more at risk than young school age children.

Infrastructure particularly associated with major urban roads must be improved to reduce the risk of injury and road fatalities among older pedestrians. This should include better street lighting, and more and better designed crossing points. Zebra crossings need to be well illuminated platform style for improved access for those with impaired mobility, with build outs to narrow the crossing distance. Signalised crossings need shorter wait times and longer crossing times to accommodate slower moving older people. Audible and visual indicators need to be enhanced. There is a wide range of new technology to assist with all of these improvements.

Improvements to the footpath and crossing infrastructure is the responsibility of road controlling authorities and the NZTA. These agencies need to work together to ensure their design standards and funding priorities provide real safety improvement for older people. LSA recommends that levels of service are developed that cater to older people on the footpath and at pedestrian crossings. These can then be easily measured.

Footpaths must remain off limits to cyclists (other than the currently permitted children on small-wheeled devices). Footpaths should be free of all wheeled recreational devices (e.g. segways, electric powered boards, scooters or enclosed battery powered vehicles) other than mobility devices used by disabled people. Postal delivery vehicles are not appropriate on footpaths.

A programme of driver education is required to reinforce Land Transport (Road User) Rules in relation to giving way to pedestrians when entering and exiting driveways, Rule 4.4(1),<sup>13</sup> and when using pedestrian crossings, Rule 10.1.<sup>14</sup>

LSA fully **supports Vision Zero for Road Safety** and the Government’s intention to investigate this in the development of a new road safety strategy.<sup>15</sup>

## Public transport

As people age, and particularly over the age of 80, they may lose their ability to drive, through the onset of medical conditions, cognitive or sensory impairment. The loss of a driver's licence should not be feared by older people or seen as equating to a loss of independence.

All communities, not just larger towns and cities, must invest in frequent and accessible public transport options so that all citizens can travel for work, shopping, medical appointments and recreation/social activities independently without the need for access to a private vehicle.

Community-run ride sharing schemes may be an option for smaller communities which cannot sustain a comprehensive public transport network.

Public transport operators should be required to train their staff to understand the needs of older people, who may need longer to board or alight and to be safely seated. The importance of stopping close to kerbs and using installed "kneeling" facilities on buses should be emphasised in driver training.

Maintaining the free travel benefit of the Super Gold Card is essential. This enables older people to get out and about without any concern about the cost of travel and reduces social isolation. Consideration should be given to extending the hours of travel, as in Auckland, to provide older people with more flexibility in their travel.

There is also a need for improved regional public land transport services to connect small communities to larger centres so that older people living in small communities can access the specialised health services increasingly centralised in larger centres, and other amenities offered by large centres. Conversely access to primary health care services must be maintained in all small communities.

Public transport vehicles and infrastructure must cater for the range of mobility needs, and those with sensory impairments. This includes bus stops and train stations with seating, public toilets, signage, well located disability parking and space for mobility scooters.

## Public places

Public places provide free meeting places for people of all ages. Public places play an important role in reducing isolation and loneliness for older people active in their community.

Public places will need to strive to better meet the needs of older people. For example libraries provide a warm, indoor space. Toilets, and quiet spaces away from children, and age-friendly seating are valued by older people.<sup>10</sup>

Parks, beaches and walkways are valuable public spaces for active older people. Seating, toilets, changing facilities at beaches, and age-friendly amenities (such as adult swings) will be needed to make these spaces welcoming to older people.

LSA notes with some concern that some urban design/landscape projects ignore pedestrian design guidelines<sup>8</sup> and standards.<sup>9</sup> For example, Pukeahu National War Memorial Park has height differences between walking parts of about 5cm which are easy to trip on. This place is very popular with older people on the many commemorative occasions such as Anzac Day.

Walkways designated as shared paths and shared road spaces must be designed with the needs of older people as a priority, with slower speeds and safe zones free from cycles and other fast moving wheeled recreational devices.

LSA recommends that **cycle paths are separate from footpaths and other pedestrian walkways.**

## Technology

The increasing use of the self-help information kiosks, service terminals and the provision of services online, for example, in supermarkets and banks and in the provision of local and central government services, poses challenges for some older people. While the next generation of older people may be more familiar with digital and online technology, they may still face difficulties keeping up with the pace of change in the digital sphere. Older people may have sensory or cognitive impairments which make standard screens and web pages difficult to use. Some older people may not be able to afford to keep their mobile phones and other digital devices up to date, creating information security and access issues. Older people should not be financially penalised for not having, or using digital services. Digital financial education should be freely available for older people.

The design and implementation of new technology will need to meet the highest accessibility standards. Software developers will need to understand the needs of older people. Where businesses or government agencies require transactions to be completed in a digital environment, they must ensure that trained, empathetic staff are available to assist those who cannot navigate the system unaided. Access to the internet will also need to be freely available in marae, community houses and libraries to ensure equitable access for those who cannot afford their own digital devices. See specific recommendations in the WHO Checklist (p.3-4).<sup>3</sup>

Autonomous vehicles may provide greater safety for older people using them and may provide better safety for pedestrians, if and only if, their rules are specified with public safety and health at the forefront.

## About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking-friendly planning and development around the country.

Our vision is **"More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places."**

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

For more information, please see: [www.livingstreets.org.nz](http://www.livingstreets.org.nz)

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## Appendix

Recommendations from **WHO Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities**<sup>3</sup> in areas of particular interest to Living Streets Aotearoa.

### Outdoor spaces and buildings

- Public areas are clean and pleasant.
- Green spaces and outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well-maintained and safe.
- Pavements are well-maintained, free of obstructions and reserved for pedestrians.
- Pavements are non-slip, are wide enough for wheelchairs and have dropped curbs to road level.
- Pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number and safe for people with different levels and types of disability, with nonslip markings, visual and audio cues and adequate crossing times.
- Drivers give way to pedestrians at intersections and pedestrian crossings.
- Cycle paths are separate from pavements and other pedestrian walkways.
- Outdoor safety is promoted by good street lighting, police patrols and community education.

### Transportation

- Public transportation costs are consistent, clearly displayed and affordable.
- Public transportation is reliable and frequent, including at night and on weekends and holidays.
- All city areas and services are accessible by public transport, with good connections and well-marked routes and vehicles.
- Vehicles are clean, well-maintained, accessible, not overcrowded and have priority seating that is respected.
- Specialized transportation is available for disabled people.
- Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.
- Transport stops and stations are conveniently located, accessible, safe, clean, well lit and well-marked, with adequate seating and shelter.
- Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules and special needs facilities.
- A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.
- Taxis are accessible and affordable, and drivers are courteous and helpful.
- Roads are well-maintained, with covered drains and good lighting.
- Traffic flow is well-regulated.
- Roadways are free of obstructions that block drivers' vision. Traffic signs and intersections are visible and well-placed.
- Driver education and refresher courses are promoted for all drivers.
- Parking and drop-off areas are safe, sufficient in number and conveniently located.
- Priority parking and drop-off spots for people with special needs are available and respected.