



# Decade of healthy ageing

Aotearoa New Zealand  
National Forum

*He Oranga Kaumātua | He Oranga Tāngata*

## THE PLEDGES

A BOLD AND PRACTICAL VISION  
FOR SUPPORTING OLDER NEW ZEALANDERS  
TO LIVE LONGER, HEALTHIER AND MORE  
CONNECTED LIVES



**The Selwyn  
Foundation**



**AGE  
CONCERN  
NEW ZEALAND**  
He Manaakitanga  
Kaumātua Aotearoa



**Office for Seniors**  
Te Tari Kaumātua





# Decade of healthy ageing

## Aotearoa New Zealand National Forum

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## Aotearoa New Zealand National Forum for the Decade of Healthy Ageing / He Oranga Kaumātua, He Oranga Tangata

### Driving collaborative action for a future-ready Aotearoa

The Aotearoa New Zealand National Forum for the Decade of Healthy Ageing was established in 2023 by the Office for Seniors, Age Concern New Zealand and The Selwyn Foundation. Formed in response to the global Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), the National Forum brings together over 30 leading organisations and professionals committed to improving the experience of ageing in New Zealand.

### A collective voice for healthy ageing

The Forum seeks to amplify New Zealand's long-term opportunities arising from an ageing population and provides a collaborative, non-partisan platform for leadership and dialogue across sectors. Strategically, its priorities focus on:

- **Transforming the ecosystem for healthy ageing** – creating age-friendly environments where kaumātua/seniors can participate, contribute and thrive.
- **Living longer in the community** – strengthening health and support services to enable ageing-in-place.
- **Challenging ageism** – promoting positive, inclusive attitudes towards ageing and older people.

Our goal is to help shape a coordinated, evidence-based national response in these areas – one that balances fiscal sustainability with fairness, dignity and opportunity for our older generations, now and in the years to come.

### The Pledge Card: a call for united action

To advance this objective, we have developed the Pledge Card for Healthy Ageing. Drawing on the latest research commissioned by the Forum from the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, "Longer, Better, More Sustainable Lives – Five Priority Areas for Investment in 2025", it outlines five key commitments that highlight the most urgent issues impacting older people's wellbeing and promotes corresponding, transformative yet practical opportunities for change in ageing policy, behaviours and actions.

The Pledge Card is a call to all sectors and political parties to work collaboratively on shared priorities that will deliver better outcomes for older New Zealanders and ensure a sustainable, equitable future for our ageing society.

### Working together for lasting impact

The Forum stands ready to contribute to policy development, research and implementation initiatives that progress these collective goals. Contact us at [info@nzdecade.org.nz](mailto:info@nzdecade.org.nz) / [www.nzdecade.org.nz](http://www.nzdecade.org.nz).

**Denise Cosgrove**

Chair | The Aotearoa New Zealand National  
Forum for the Decade of Healthy Ageing

CEO | The Selwyn Foundation





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## OUR 5 PLEDGES

### PLEDGE 1 BETTER DATA ON AGEING

CAPTURE THE CONTRIBUTION OF  
OLDER GENERATIONS IN DATA  
AND REPORTING



### PLEDGE 5 PROACTIVE HEALTH CHECKS

PROACTIVE HEALTH  
CHECKS FOR  
HEALTHY AGEING



### PLEDGE 2 SECURE HOUSING IN COMMUNITY

CONDUCT A NATIONAL  
REVIEW OF HOUSING  
INSECURITY FOR  
OLDER GENERATIONS



### PLEDGE 4 COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO STAY CONNECTED

EXPANDING WRAP-AROUND COMMUNITY-  
DRIVEN SUPPORT FOR OLDER  
NEW ZEALANDERS



### PLEDGE 3 PLAN TO THRIVE TO 105

ALL NEW ZEALANDERS ARE SUPPORTED  
TO DEVELOP A PERSONALISED PLAN  
TO THRIVE FOR LIFE





# PLEDGE 1

CAPTURE THE CONTRIBUTION OF OLDER GENERATIONS IN DATA AND REPORTING



## BETTER DATA ON AGEING

### WHY?

New Zealanders live full and productive lives beyond the age of 65, and we know that employment rates are increasing for 65-69, 70-74 and 75+ year olds. However in definitions of the 'working age population', it is often assumed that those over 65 are retired. In data and reporting, older generations are treated as a homogeneous group of 'over-65s' that does not accurately reflect the diversity of life stages.

When people aged 65 and over are treated as a single group, we ignore critical differences in health, income, culture, capability, needs and aspirations. This not only distorts public understanding, it drives outdated assumptions and poor decision-making across policy, service delivery, funding, design and innovation.

Therefore – to better recognise the contribution and improve decision-making – we need to change the way we characterise age groups beyond the ambiguous 'over-65' category.

### ACTION:

We will work with Stats NZ and other government agencies, researchers, media and private sector organisations to change the way we report on data for over-65s by disaggregating the data into separate age and other policy-relevant segments e.g. renters and homeowners, employed, business owners and volunteers.



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We pledge to change the way we report on older generations by disaggregating data and highlighting strengths and contributions not just challenges or needs.





# PLEDGE 2

CONDUCT A NATIONAL REVIEW OF HOUSING INSECURITY FOR OLDER GENERATIONS



## SECURE HOUSING IN COMMUNITY

### WHY?

Housing is central to healthy ageing, financial well-being and independence. When older generations can age in community, they are more able to participate in the things they love such as work, volunteering and supporting their families and wider community. Within Iwi and hapu, older Māori are critical to the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and culture.

While New Zealanders want to age well within their communities, much of our housing stock is not suitable or stable to support this. The quality and appropriateness of housing is an urgent issue, and only 5% of rental housing is physically accessible for older people.

Furthermore, we know that 40% of Kiwis aged 65+ are reliant on superannuation and one in five are still paying a mortgage. By 2048, the number of over-65s renting is expected to double.

### ACTION:

**We will work with government, Iwi and community providers to identify and implement practical improvements that can make housing safer and more secure for older generations. This includes expanding uptake of existing supports for home modifications, trialling local housing navigators for older renters, and prioritising minor changes that make a major difference – like heating, access and bathroom safety.**

**We will champion these efforts as part of a national effort to move from reviewing the problem to acting on what we already know works.**



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We pledge to progress tangible improvements to address housing insecurity for older people starting with practical changes to make homes suitable for ageing in place.





# PLEDGE 3

ALL NEW ZEALANDERS ARE SUPPORTED TO DEVELOP A PERSONALISED PLAN TO THRIVE FOR LIFE



## PLAN TO THRIVE TO 105

### WHY?

New Zealanders born in the 2020s are expected to live to 88 (males) and 91 (females). But a 'healthy life' expectancy is considerably less: 70.7 years for males and 72.3 years for females. While New Zealanders are living longer, these additional years are not always years spent thriving.

In 2023, the median weekly income for those aged 65 and over was \$475, compared to \$921 for all age groups, reflecting a significant income disparity. Approximately 40% of individuals aged 65+ depend solely on New Zealand superannuation payment for their income, with an additional 20% having only a small amount more. Disparities are far worse for Māori and Pacific people, and women also generally have less net wealth at retirement.

Empowering people to make comprehensive life plans that connect both social and economic considerations will therefore support greater agency and preparedness for all life stages. A new kind of 'toolkit' is called for, designed to help every New Zealander build a plan that provides a clear, integrated life-stage approach. Spanning finance, housing, health and career/purpose, this personalised plan will help support choice, security and independence beyond 30+ years as a senior.

### ACTION:

**We will develop and implement a toolkit that supports interconnected lifetime planning. We will work with NGOs, Iwi and government agencies to utilise existing resources, knowledge, Te Ao Māori and shared experiences so that a plan to thrive will be a new social norm for a longevity era.**



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**We pledge** to empower people to plan for full, active and independent lives. This means linking financial, housing, health, wellbeing and career planning into a cohesive longevity pathway through careful planning.





# PLEDGE 4

EXPANDING WRAP-AROUND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SUPPORT FOR OLDER NEW ZEALANDERS



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO STAY CONNECTED

### WHY?

Social isolation has been associated with an approximately 57% increased risk of Emergency Department visits and a 68% increased risk of hospitalisation. 17% of people aged 65+ in New Zealand are socially vulnerable, and 50% of those over 80 are lonely all or most of the time. We know that loneliness is hazardous: almost a quarter of those who are lonely may be at risk of premature death. Being lonely or socially isolated is also a barrier for seniors in accessing support services.

The most effective way to support older people to stay connected within their community is through a coordinated network of existing trusted community services such as Iwi, NGOs, churches, community groups and leaders. Through improved coordination and an approach that puts whānau and the older person at the centre of services, we can better enable access and participation.

### ACTION:

**We will apply proven models of community-led coordination and replicate this in the context of older generations. A community-led model should include Kaupapa Māori services that can offer culturally appropriate care for Māori, promote Mātauranga Māori, tikanga Māori and whānau-centred models of care.**

Through local design, cultural relevance and whole-of-person support, we can enable more people to age well in community.



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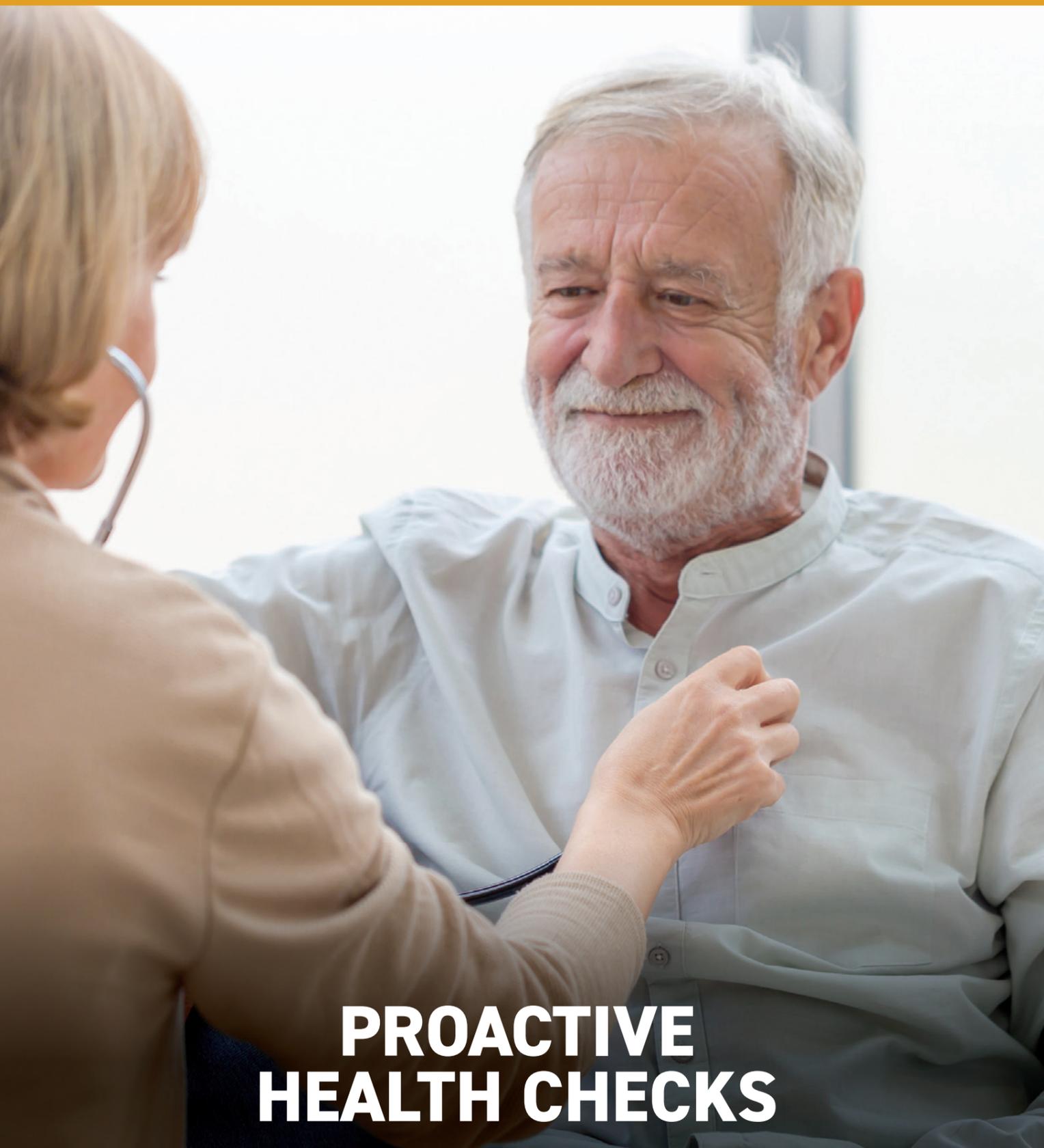
We pledge to expand community-driven wrap-around services that support seniors to age well in place in age-friendly communities.





# PLEDGE 5

PROACTIVE HEALTH CHECKS  
FOR HEALTHY AGEING



## PROACTIVE HEALTH CHECKS

### WHY?

Many chronic conditions and age-related impairments can be prevented, delayed or managed better when risks are identified early and people are supported to take action. Conditions such as dementia can be reduced through lifestyle changes, early screening and intervention.

A shift toward prevention through early intervention will therefore support longer periods of wellbeing, independence and contribution while contributing to a reduction in both unnecessary hospitalisations and demand for long-term care, especially when embedded in trusted local settings.

75% of life expectancy gains are made after age 65 – making later-life prevention a powerful opportunity for public health impact. Creating a participative primary prevention approach using trusted, community-based providers will empower older people and whānau to maintain health and autonomy.

### ACTION:

**We will pilot community-based health checks for older New Zealanders, delivered through pharmacies, marae, hauora services and other trusted providers. These checks will be based on health planning and screening tools that go beyond disease screening to support people with tailored prevention plans according to their health needs/risk profile.**

**Community-led design is essential to the implementation of this pledge to ensure equity, accessibility and meaningful impact and avoid putting further pressure on the health system. Implementation will begin with funded pilots in diverse communities, and expand through partnership with PHOs, Iwi providers, aged care NGOs and health agencies.**



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**We pledge** to roll out proactive, community-based health checks that empower older New Zealanders to make informed decisions and take preventative action to support longer, healthier, more independent lives.





# Decade of **healthy** ageing

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