

4. UPDATE ON OLDER PERSONS' POLICY

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The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Older Persons' Policy

BACKGROUND

In 1998 the Council developed its Older Persons' Policy followed by an action plan in 1999. In November 2002 Councillor Stonhill initiated a forum on Positive Ageing, which engaged representatives of networks and agencies within the health sector. As a result, it was decided to invite representatives to form an external reference group. Representation was broadened to include government agencies including Housing New Zealand, Inland Revenue Department and Ministry of Social Development.

RATIONALE

Changing demographics in Christchurch necessitate the Council examining its planning and readiness to cope with the predicted increase in the percentage of the city's population in the 65+ age group.

It is recognised that while central government has introduced several effective strategies in anticipation of the national changes predicted over the next 20 years, little collaborative, intersectoral, or inter-unit planning has taken place at a local level.

STATISTICS AND TRENDS

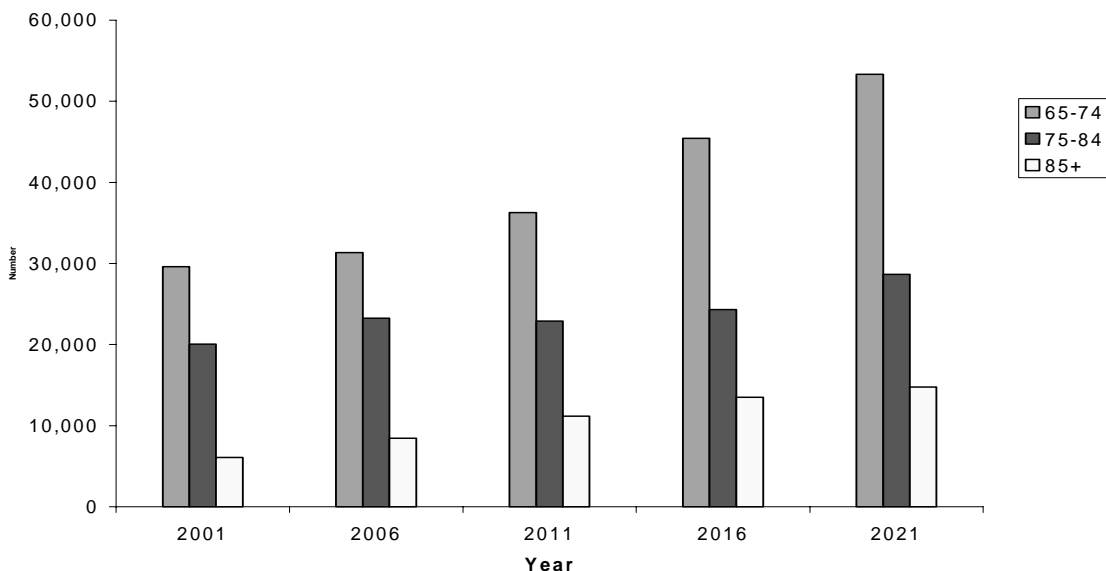
In New Zealand the median age is now 35 years but will be 46 years by 2051. This means that 50% of the population will be 46 years old. Between 1996 and 2051 the percentage of the New Zealand population 65 and over is expected to grow from 12% to 25% (Statistics New Zealand 1998).

Projections made by Statistics New Zealand suggest that the population aged 65 and over will grow nationally by about 100,000 during the next 10 years to reach 566,000 by 2011. After this the increase will accelerate as the 'baby boom' generation, born during the high birth rate years of the 1950s and 1960s begins to enter this age. Between 2011 and 2021, the older population is expected to grow by 215,000 nationally and between 2021 and 2031, by another 250,000.

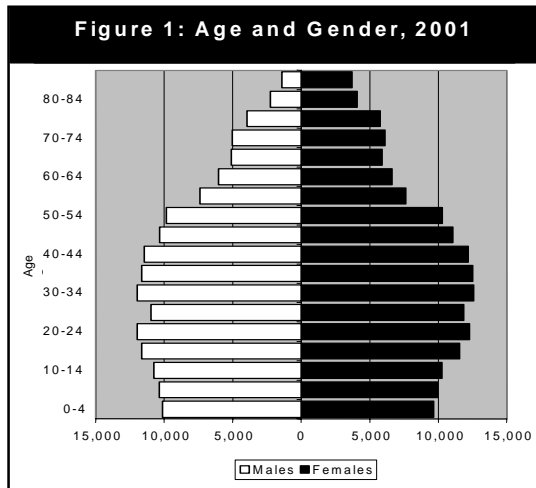
By 2051 there is likely to be 1.8 million people aged 65 years and over in New Zealand representing an increase of 165% since 1999. At that stage, older people are expected to make up 26% of the New Zealand population of 4.63 million. Given that Christchurch holds a high proportion of this sector of the population, relative to the rest of New Zealand as a whole, the implications for the future are significant.

Graph 5

CDHB Population Projections 2001 - 2021



Source: Statistics New Zealand



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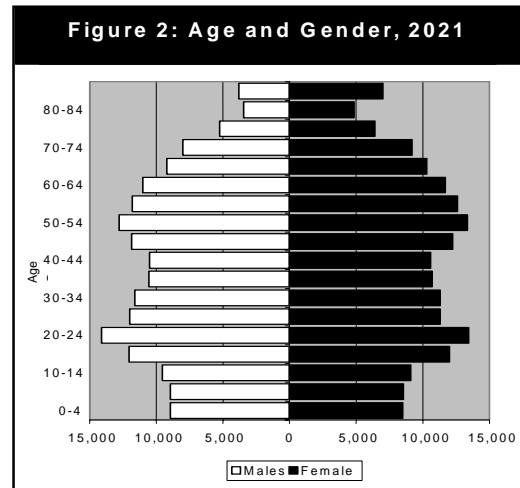


Figure 1 above illustrates the present age and gender structure of Christchurch's resident population: a bell shaped curve indicating an ageing population. By 2021 however, (Figure 2), this trend has been exacerbated considerably with a large influx of those aged 50 years and above, and a subsequent decline in the younger age groups of those aged between 25 and 44 years and under 15 year olds. In addition, the median age of Christchurch residents has also increased over the last few decades from 27.9 years in 1976, to 35.5 years in 2001; this further confirms the ageing trend.

It can be seen from these graphs that there are significant issues for this age group in terms of transport, housing and accommodation, access to services, leisure and recreation, employment, community support, dependency, urban planning.

When assessing future implications of population ageing, there is a need to consider diversity and cohort affects. Those in the Third Age from 65 up to 75 or 80 will tend to be engaged in active living, possibly still in the paid workforce. It may be assumed that those in the 80 years plus group will lose their capacity for independent living while disability and need for care will increase - the Fourth Age. It is this Fourth Age which will bring the most dramatic increase.

More women moving into the 85 plus age group will have had their own careers and financial security and knowledge. Both men and women will have higher educational qualifications and achievements and consequentially a potential skill base from which other generations could draw. Ethnic diversity will also grow. These factors may potentially contribute to stronger communities within Christchurch.

EXTERNAL REFERENCE GROUP

The external reference group has a potentially vital role to play in informing and advising on planning and policy. Each member represents significant agencies and networks which form a pool of people equipped to assist the Council in its development of the implementation of the Action Plan.

Members currently represent Pacific Island Community Public Health; Third Age CDC; Age Concern; Ngai Tahu; Department of Work and Income; Pegasus Health; Nurse Maude Association; Presbyterian Support; Canterbury District Health Board; Inland Revenue Department; Housing New Zealand; Alzheimers Canterbury; Christchurch School of Medicine.

A chair will be appointed on 16 April and terms of reference developed.

MAPPING PROJECT

Members of the external reference group in co-operation with government agencies and the Council have committed to contributing data to enable a detailed snapshot of Christchurch's older population. This will form a useful resource for planning.

INTERNAL INFORMATION

Units within the Christchurch City Council are currently providing information of both current activities and future planning for this sector. This will contribute to a report on progress on implementing the Older Persons' Action Plan 1999 which will go to the Community and Leisure Committee in June/July 2003. An internal working group is forming with the intention of having an interactive workshop later this year, to assist in collaborative planning.

CONCLUSION

There is a great potential for developing and implementing a collaborative Action Plan to assist both the Council, government agencies and community groups in meeting the needs of the growing numbers of Christchurch citizens in the 65 and above age group. Major implications exist for Council planning and projects. Opportunity exists for creative, cost-effective and collaborative planning to enhance Christchurch as a city which cares for older people.

Staff

Recommendation: That the update be received.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the Committee note the importance of the external reference group and the work being done both internally and externally to plan for the demographic changes.