Happy New Year. I hope you all enjoyed the holiday season and were able to spend some quality time with your loved ones. Last year was challenging for most people, and I’m sure it’s one we will never forget. Although things aren’t quite back to normal yet, I am very optimistic that 2021 will be memorable for better reasons.

From Minister for Seniors Ayesha Verrall

As Minister for Seniors, I am looking forward to driving progress on the implementation of the Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 strategy.

It’s common knowledge that we have an ageing population. By 2034, there will be 1.2 million people aged 65 and over, making up just over a fifth of the population. We have known for some time that we need to plan for the challenges that come with people living longer, but the Better Later Life strategy goes much further than that. This strategy is focused on creating opportunities for all of us to participate, contribute, and be valued as we age, so we can thrive in later life.

One key area for action in the strategy that I am particularly interested in, especially because of the impact of COVID-19, is enhancing opportunities for participation and social connection. Even though the strategy was developed before the pandemic started, this point has become even more relevant in the wake of COVID-19. Those aged 70 and over were in lockdown for longer than most people. A lot of older people live alone, which can increase the risk of loneliness and social isolation. The strategy addresses ways to better support and encourage older people to be involved, as being connected with our family, whānau, and the wider community is important for our wellbeing as we age.

The other four key areas are; achieving financial security and economic participation, promoting healthy ageing and improving access to services, creating diverse housing choices and options, and making environments accessible. These priorities for action are a common roadmap for central and local government, NGOs, businesses and communities to focus on and achieve better outcomes for older New Zealanders.

We all have a role to play in implementing the strategy, to make sure older New Zealanders lead valued, connected and fulfilling lives. If you haven’t read the strategy, I encourage you to check it out and see how we can make later life better for all New Zealanders.

In this issue

Welcome to the first SuperSeniors newsletter of 2021.

This issue kicks off with a New Year message from the Minister for Seniors, Ayesha Verrall where she discusses the importance of the Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 strategy.

We celebrate the hard work of the three people honoured for services to seniors in the New Year’s honours list, who are making a significant difference to the lives of older New Zealanders.

We take a look at the recipients of the Community Connects Grants and the exciting projects that we can expect to see in the very near future.

The start of the New Year is also the perfect time to think about your health, so this issue focuses on how to look after your wellbeing.

We have a message from Retirement Commissioner Jane Wrightson, encouraging you to send your feedback on a discussion paper reviewing the rules and regulations surrounding retirement villages.

Also, in this issue are details about the changes to New Zealand’s Relay Services, information about a free driving course created to help refresh and improve your skills, and a warning from Consumer NZ about a discount scheme being offered to seniors.

Finally, we have information about what to do if you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse and needs help.
New Year’s Honours for Services to Seniors

Three people have been recognised in the New Year Honours List for their services to seniors and have been awarded The Queen’s Service Medal.

Hokikau ‘Hoki’ Kataraina Purcell and Lasalo Owen Purcell for services to seniors and Māori.

Hoki Purcell is a founding Board member of the Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust (also known as Rauawaawa) and her husband, founding member Owen Purcell, has been the Chair of the Trust since 2019.

The Hamilton couple have been recognised for their passion and dedication to supporting Kaumātua, and say that “if our vision was represented by a tree, then its branches would be far-reaching into the many different areas of need including, safety, wellbeing, housing, health, social connection, wellbeing”.

Notable achievements include their involvement in the Te Rūnanga o Kirikiriroa led development of the very first Kaumātua village to be built in Kirikiriroa; upgrading the Trust’s facilities to better meet the needs of Kaumātua; leading the successful PledgeMe campaign ‘Keeping up with Kaumātua’, giving keynote presentations both internationally and domestically; and their recent COVID response work in the Waikato, led by Te Kōhao Health.

Preferring to stay in the background, the Purcells say “being a visible lead” has been challenging for them but “when there is a need, there must be a response, and our personal preferences are put aside for the greater good”.

On receiving the honour, the Purcells feel “absolute shock, lost for words, overwhelmed and a great sense of privilege to both be acknowledged at the same time in this way”.

Maxwell Thomas ‘Max’ Robins for services to healthcare and seniors.

Max Robins, who has served as Deputy Chair of the New Zealand Aged Care Association since 2006, has over 30 years of service in the health sector under his belt. Max has contributed significantly to the aged residential care industry as a member of the Aged Residential Care Steering Group and Chief Executive of CHT Healthcare, a not-for-profit trust.

Community Connects grants recipients

The Office for Seniors has announced seven successful applicants in the latest funding round of Community Connects grants.

The grants of up to $15,000 help fund projects that promote the inclusion and contribution of older people and support their community to become age friendly.

The successful recipients and projects are:

- **Alzheimer's Marlborough**, who will be working with local businesses to adopt the Dementia Friends or Dementia Friendly Recognition programme, to ensure people living with dementia continue to be active and engaged in their communities.

- **Parksyde Trust Rotorua’s Age Friendly Rotorua Strategy**, which will be developed with key partners that include local iwi and hapū, on how the city prepares for an increase in the older population.

- **Tauranga City Council’s Successful Ageing in a Post-COVID Environment project**, which aims to ensure that the community enables seniors to be well, active, connected, and secure.

- **The Family Centre Lower Hutt** will be developing an age friendly plan for Pasifika seniors in Hutt Valley and Wainuiomata.

- **Waikato Indian Senior Citizen’s Association** will be using the grant to reduce social isolation with a sustainable Day Time Activity Programme, establishing a space for senior citizens to come together to chat, eat, play games, attend talks, and do yoga on a weekly basis.

- **Rotorua Multicultural Council** will be establishing programmes for ethnic senior migrants to gain digital skills, integrate, and make social connections.

- **Age Concern Nelson Tasman** plans to develop and deliver an action plan to increase social connections for older people in rural parts of the Tasman district.

For more information on Community Connects grants go to [www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz](http://www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz)
The benefits of pets

Want to start 2021 with a cuddly companion? If you’re considering pet ownership, there are lots of great reasons to bring a ‘fur baby’ into your life.

“Extensive research shows that interacting with animals has multiple physical and mental health benefits for seniors,” according to a spokesperson for the SPCA.

These benefits include the unconditional companionship and comfort pets offer, especially to those who are lonely or isolated. A recent study found that people aged 65 and over were 29 per cent more likely to be lonely if they were living alone. By 2034 it’s estimated that people in this age bracket living alone will make up 55 per cent of all people living alone.

“Older people tend to make responsible animal guardians and typically have a lot more time to give to an animal, which is mutually beneficial for both animal and the owner,” the SPCA adds.

Don’t want to commit? Volunteer! There are several opportunities to work with organisations across the country, including at the SPCA whose 5,000-strong volunteer workforce covers roles such as fostering animals before they are ready for adoption.

Alternatively, you can research your options at Seek Volunteer www.seekvolunteer.co.nz and Volunteering New Zealand www.volunteeringnz.org.nz

If you are fortunate enough to be able to commit to owning a pet, be sure to pick your pet with care, the SPCA advises. For example, dogs generally need a lot of exercise and are ideal if you regularly go out on long walks. However, smaller breeds need less exercise, so are usually easier to look after.

If you are already a pet owner, creating an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) can give you peace of mind by choosing someone you trust to make important decisions about your furry friend, in the event you’re not able to.

Even without an EPA, you can start working with a friend or family member who is happy to care for your pet if you can’t.

Free refresher courses for older drivers

Have you kept up with changes to the road code?

Age Concern New Zealand, together with Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency), will be holding free refresher courses for older drivers across urban, rural, and remote areas in New Zealand.

The theory-based programme, called ‘Staying Safe’, is designed to enhance your knowledge, assess your current driving behaviour, and build confidence.

Staying Safe is four-hours of classroom-based learning and is interactive, answering any questions you might have.

Everyone who attends will be issued with a certificate and will also be given a workbook to take away.

Classes will be rolled out across Aotearoa from mid-February and will take place through the year.

To book your spot, call 0800 65 2 105 or visit www.ageconcern.org.nz

Want to learn as a group? You can request larger bookings of around 15-20 people.

SuperGold card holders and Māori or Pasifika drivers over 60 are eligible.

Staying Safe is a driving course for seniors
Your post-summer wellness plan

It’s almost time to say goodbye to the summer sun, and the changing of the seasons is the perfect time to reflect on how to look after your mental well-being.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that’s related to the change of season from summer to winter.

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand suggests getting outdoors and making the most of the weather while it’s still warm and dry, and staying connected to loved ones.

“It is said that ‘friends and family are good medicine’, the Mental Health Foundation says.

“You may also find that hobbies or voluntary work contribute to a sense of worth and belonging in a community.

“These are just a few things that can protect you from depression and SAD, or help you make a successful recovery from it.”

You can do this and more to boost your mental health by incorporating the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” into your daily life. These are:

• Connect – Host a BBQ with friends, family or Whānau or have a friend over for coffee
• Give – Give your time to others! This could be helping a neighbour, volunteering with animals, or using your experience to mentor someone else
• Take notice – Take a moment to reflect on the present – for example, how proud you are of your thriving garden or what you’re grateful for today

Keep learning – Watching documentaries, listening to educational podcasts, and even doing a crossword puzzle help keep your mind sharp. Love books? You can learn and be sociable at the same time by joining a book club or starting your own

Be active – Go for walks with loved ones

Be sure to look out for the signs that you or someone you know might have SAD, including changes in sleep, moods, energy, and appetite.

For more information on taking care of your wellbeing go to the Mental Health Foundation Website at www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Need to talk? Free call 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor.

Elder Abuse – it’s not OK

With the holidays coming to an end, along with the increased opportunities to socialise at summer BBQs and parties, it’s even more important to keep an eye out for the older people in your life.

One in ten people 65 and over will experience some form of elder abuse. Those that commit elder abuse are often someone close to their victim; family members, friends, neighbours. They might even be someone that is relied on for support or care.

If you’re concerned that someone is experiencing elder abuse, it’s OK to help. Something as simple as asking how they are or offering support can make a real difference.

The sooner you reach out, the sooner they can get help.

If you have concerns about how you or someone you know is being treated, reach out.

Elder Abuse – it’s not OK
I hope you’ve all had a good start to 2021. One of my office’s projects this year is talking to government about a recommended review of the rules and regulations surrounding retirement villages. If you or a loved one live in one, we’d like to hear from you.

Late last year we released a discussion paper to describe the law and regulations that govern how villages operate, discuss core issues, and start a conversation between industry, residents and government about if and where change is desirable. We have indicated areas we think warrant further work.

The legislative framework in question includes the Retirement Villages Act 2003, its Regulations, and the Retirement Villages Code of Practice 2008. One of my statutory obligations under the Act is to monitor the framework’s effectiveness, ensuring it is fair and balanced for both the industry and consumers.

Our paper proposes it is timely, effective, and efficient for a policy review of all elements of the framework, to be undertaken by the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development (MHUD), with support from my office.

Incontinence can be an uncomfortable topic to discuss, as many people are too embarrassed to talk about their struggles with even those closest to them. However, it’s a lot more common than you might think.

Women are twice as likely than men to suffer from urinary incontinence at some stage of their lives. It is estimated that between 30 to 60 per cent of middle-aged and older women are affected.

However, far from being a natural and inevitable part of the ageing process – there are things you can do about it and help is available too.

Changes in lifestyle, such as quitting smoking and eating well, have shown to help alleviate the symptoms of incontinence.

Women can also do pelvic floor muscle training and this is most effective when guided by a physiotherapist.

You can call the Continence Helpline free on 0800 650 659 or go through your GP to arrange an assessment.

You may also be eligible for free continence products from your local DHB or ACC, or subsidised products. For those with an ongoing need for products, funding might be available through the Disability Allowance.

For more information visit www.continence.org.nz

Don’t suffer in silence, your doctor or DHB might be able to help.
Consumers warned against discount website

Consumer NZ is warning of an online discount scheme aimed at seniors that promises access deals that are already freely available to everyone.

Senior Advantage charges an upfront yearly fee of $39, claiming on its website that members can “save up to 70% at almost every store in New Zealand”.

However, Consumer NZ has voiced concerns alongside Choice, a consumer watchdog in Australia, where the business also operates.

A recent press release from Consumer NZ website states that when a signed-up member of Senior Advantage in Australia “clicked on one of the Senior Advantage Woolworths deals, they were just taken to the supermarket’s half-price specials page”.

Another reason to be wary of the scheme is that there are no official partners. Consumer NZ states that although there are logos of Pak’n’Save, New World and Countdown on the Senior Advantage website, none of the supermarkets featured have any affiliation with the programme.

If you’ve signed up for Senior Advantage and feel misled, you can make a complaint to the Commerce Commission at www.comcom.govt.nz and also get in touch with Consumer NZ at www.consumer.org.nz

Image credit: Centre for Ageing Better/Peter Kindersley

Relay Service changes

New Zealand’s Relay Services assist people who are deaf, hard of hearing, speech-impaired and deafblind to communicate with others over the phone.

As of 1 February 2021, there have been some changes to these services. You can now check out a new-look website at nzrelay.co.nz, and a new NZ Relay app for mobile phones and tablets is available to download from the App Store and Google Play Store.

This free app can be used to make and receive calls using Text Relay and Captioned Relay, whether you’re at home or on the go. Calls will use your mobile data or Wi-Fi connection.

If you use the CapTel (captioned telephone) service, your CapTel handset will no longer show captions on the screen. Instead, you can now make captioned calls using the NZ Relay app. Please note that your CapTel handset will continue to work as a landline phone.

Anyone who has a CapTel handset can contact NZ Relay to arrange a refund. You can receive a refund regardless of whether you want to return your handset or keep it to use as a landline phone.

If you, a friend, or whānau member would like personalised help and support to navigate these changes, please get in touch with the NZ Relay help desk today via email: helpdesk@nzrelay.co.nz
SuperGold Card special offers

Check out the latest special offers for our super seniors through the SuperGold website.

WIN
1 of 5 summer wellness packs valued at $100 each

Book a Full body MoleMap now using the promo code SUNGOLD50 to enter the competition.*

* Terms and conditions apply

Treat yourself to a lightweight folding walker

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Disclaimer: The SuperGold Card programme enables independent businesses to offer discounts and benefits to older New Zealanders. The Ministry of Social Development is not associated with any seller and does not guarantee any representation made by a seller and any future dispute will need to be taken up with the seller not the Ministry of Social Development. Offers range in size and nature and cardholders should always check to see if a better offer is available locally.