What a year 2020 has been so far, and it’s flying by.

As we continue to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 it’s an important time for all of us to support local businesses when we can. Every purchase we make helps to keep people employed, puts money back in people’s pockets and gets our communities humming again.

A great way you can support local business, without breaking the bank, is by looking for deals through the SuperGold app and website, that I launched last October. SuperGold gives you thousands of instant discounts and offers across New Zealand. It even has a function to show the offers near you.

As a part of the refresh of SuperGold, to make the card work better for seniors, over 4,800 businesses were confirmed as part of the SuperGold network and over 500 new businesses signed up. It’s great when I’m out in the community to hear from seniors who love their card and use the app and website regularly. Since the launch there have been over 120,000 SuperGold app downloads, 400,000 SuperGold website users and over 2 million-page views.

Another way to help our country recover, if you have some free time and can afford it, is to make a trip somewhere in New Zealand. Going on a wee holiday in our own backyard is a great way to help local tourism businesses get back on their feet. After lockdown, and now being in a country with so few restrictions, it’s a real treat that we are in the position to be able to travel domestically and see the beauty our country has to offer.

There are plenty of deals available in the SuperGold website for rental cars, hotels and even activities in some of our tourism hot spots. Go to the SuperGold website www.supergold.govt.nz for more information on the deals on offer across the country.

There’s a lot of other helpful information in this newsletter for seniors and about how we are working to recover from COVID-19. If you have friends or family who don’t get this newsletter, get them to sign-up using the link on the SuperSeniors website www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz

In this issue

Minister for Seniors, Tracey Martin, talks about how we can support the recovery from COVID-19 and the importance of the SuperGold card.

We have details on how to get involved in volunteering. It’s a great way of staying connected and using your skills and experience to help the community.

Check out our story on the “Have Our Say” project by University of Auckland researchers.

If you are over 70, they want to hear from you about your experience throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read about the amazing contributions by those recognised in this year’s Queen’s Birthday Honours list for services to seniors and gerontology.


Community Connect grants applications are now open! Find out more about who is eligible and how to apply in the story below.
Have you thought about volunteering?

If you are looking for a way to help as New Zealand recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteering is a great way of making a difference and supporting your community. Volunteers add a lot of value to our country; many organisations would be unable to carry out their work without the help of volunteers. Demand for these services has only increased because of the financial impact of the pandemic on New Zealand households.

There are many personal benefits to volunteering. Volunteering provides us with a sense of purpose and is a great opportunity to use our experience and skills. Volunteering is also a way of connecting with others and meeting new like-minded people. As we age, it is important we remain socially connected. This may have been difficult for some people during the lockdown, especially for people who were isolating alone.

There are volunteering opportunities for all types of interests and skill sets all over the country. Volunteers have a huge variety of roles, providing invaluable support to schools, charities, and community organisations. Many older people provide volunteer services that support other older people.

Volunteering New Zealand is an association of volunteer centres and national and regional organisations with a commitment to volunteering. If you are interested, they can help connect you with organisations seeking volunteers through their website www.volunteeringnz.org.nz. There are also 17 regional Volunteer Centres that you can get in touch with by contacting 0800 865 268.

If there is a specific organisation you are interested in supporting, you can also check their website for information on the support they are looking for.

Have Our Say

If you are over 70, University of Auckland researchers would like you to write to them about your life during COVID-19.

The “Have Our Say” project aims to help make sure that older people aren’t just talked about, but that they are listened to and heard.

“Since COVID-19 struck, we have heard a lot about older people - but we haven’t heard much from older people,” says lead researcher Professor Merryn Gott. “The over-70s tended to be lumped together and collectively characterised as passive and vulnerable.”

“We would like to change that and use the lockdown experiences of older people to inform research about government and media responses in the event of future pandemics or similar crises.”

If you are interested in participating you can write whatever you want, in whatever language you want. There is also the option to send in digital photographs and videos. You can also decide if you want your letter included in an Auckland War Memorial Museum archive.

The team have received over 160 letters already, with fascinating insights being shared about what people enjoyed, the challenges they faced, and what other times in their life lockdown reminded them of.

The project is being conducted by the Te Arai Research Group based at the School of Nursing, University of Auckland and funded by the Auckland Medical Research Foundation. Further information is available at www.haveoursay.org

You can post your letter to:
Have Our Say
c / o School of Nursing
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland Mail Centre, Auckland 1142

Or email it to letters@HaveOurSay.org
Queen’s Birthday Honours

The Queen’s Birthday Honours recognises the unique achievements of many great New Zealanders, from all walks of life. Those who were honoured this year included five people who have made significant contributions to seniors and gerontology.

Donald McKay of Maungaturoto was named a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM). He was Chairman of Maungaturoto Community Charitable Trust Inc. (MCCT) for 30 years and remains a board member. MCCT has focused on providing aged care support and under Mr McKay’s leadership, the MCCT has established a 14-bed rest home, 14 low-priced rental units, 14 further discounted housing units, and numerous rooms for doctors and other health professionals at low-cost.

Dr Sally Keeling was also made Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM). She has been recognised for her significant contributions as a senior lecturer and researcher in the field of gerontology. She was the President of the New Zealand Association of Gerontology from 2002 to 2005 and held several other important roles in this area.

Peter Smale was named a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to seniors in his role as Director and Chairperson of Abbeyfield New Zealand, a housing charity that provides sheltered housing for older people. He was involved in the establishment of 10 of the 14 New Zealand homes.

Maher Singh received her Queen Service Medal (QSM) for her work as an executive member of the New Zealand Indian Senior Citizens Association (ISCA) and the New Zealand Fijian Senior Citizens Association (FSCA) since 2000. She works alongside the New Zealand Police and social support providers to help seniors who are victims of elder abuse and frequently visits seniors at their homes, rest homes or in hospital, as well as organising outings and monthly meetings.

Roy Reid of Takaka was awarded his Queen Service Medal (QSM) for his many years of service to Grey Power. Most notably, he has been a voluntary member and President of Grey Power Golden Bay Association for close to 20 years, he was a key figure in modernising the organisation, and is currently the treasurer of the Grey Power New Zealand Federation.

Delays to NZ Super changes

From 9 November 2020, the Government is making changes to NZ Super and Veteran’s Pension. The changes aim to modernise superannuation in New Zealand.

Changes to non-qualifying partners

Currently, some people getting NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension can include their partner who doesn’t qualify because of their circumstances. This is called including a non-qualifying partner in your payment.

From 9 November 2020, people applying for, or already getting, NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension won’t be able to include a non-qualifying partner in their payment. Instead, their partner will be able to apply for other kinds of assistance.

If your partner is included in your payments before 9 November

If your partner is included in your NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension payment before 9 November, this change won’t affect you. You’ll continue getting your payments unless your circumstances change. For example, your income goes above the cut-off point or you decide to remove your partner from your payment.

If you decide to remove your partner, you won’t be able to include them in your payment again from 9 November 2020.

If this happens, MSD will talk with both of you about your options and how they may be able to help.

Changes to some overseas pension deductions

Currently, if your partner gets an overseas pension, this can affect your NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension payment. This depends on the amount of their overseas pension.

From 9 November 2020, MSD will no longer make deductions from your NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension because of your partner’s overseas pension. This recognises you as an individual with your own entitlement to superannuation.

More information

MSD will write to people affected by these changes over the next couple of months. There’s also more information on the Work and Income website www.workandincome.govt.nz
COVID-19 has not only been a health emergency, but also a human rights emergency.

The human rights to life, health care and protection, and accessible information have been key concerns of ours at the Human Rights Commission. But those human rights have to be balanced with other important human rights, such as freedom of movement.

Also, in a health emergency, the government is allowed to restrict some human rights provided the restrictions are fair, non-discriminatory, proportionate and subject to review.

These are among the challenging issues the government - and the Human Rights Commission - has to wrestle with during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know older people are among those most affected and at risk from COVID-19. Older people have the right to health care and protection under international human rights law. The government is obliged to make every possible effort, within available resources, to deliver this human right to everyone in a non-discriminatory way.

In our response to COVID-19, the Commission focused on providing a platform for those affected so their voices - their concerns - could be heard.

We also offered constructive human rights advice to government while holding it to account for its actions. This involved calling for equitable access to personal protective equipment (PPE), pushing for specific support for older persons, and in April publishing an 18-page report Human Rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi: COVID-19 and Alert Level 4.

In our report, we warmly commend the Government’s response to COVID-19. But we also highlight some shortcomings. For example, the distribution of PPE, as well as guidance on its use, was slow. Additionally, the report provides constructive suggestions for the COVID-19 recovery phase.

The Human Rights Commission will continue to advocate for the rights of older people in Aotearoa New Zealand. If you think you have faced discrimination, you can make a complaint to us. Our Infoline team are available at 0800 496 877 or on the Human Rights Commission website www.hrc.co.nz

COVID-19 and the General Election

The 2020 General Election and referendums will be a little different because of COVID-19.

The Electoral Commission have put processes in place to keep everyone safe and have a plan for our election, even if we move alert levels.

The Electoral Commission will open more voting places than usual to reduce queues, and use larger venues where possible to give you more space.

To give everyone time to vote, voting will start on Saturday 5 September - 2 days earlier than planned. Voting will still end at 7pm on election day, Saturday 19 September.

You can still vote from rest homes and hospitals

If you are in hospital or live in a rest home the Electoral Commission will work with hospital and rest home managers to find the best way to help you vote.

If you need to stay home

If you need to stay home, you’ll have other ways of voting including voting by post. You’ll find more information about postal voting on the Electoral Commission website www.vote.nz/covid-19.

If you go into isolation during the voting period, you’ll be able to get someone to collect and deliver your voting papers for you.

Telephone dictation service

If you’re blind, partially blind or have a physical disability that means you can’t mark your voting paper without help, you can vote using the telephone dictation service.

You need to register to use the telephone dictation service in the 2020 General Election and referendums, even if you’ve used it at previous elections.

You can register to vote by telephone dictation from Monday 17 August by calling 0800 028 028 and selecting option 1 to register.

For more information you can go to the Electoral Commission website www.vote.nz or call 0800 36 76 56.

The General Election and referendums on End of Life Choice and cannabis will be held in September.
**Menzshed**

If you are handy with tools or if you are just interested in learning a thing or two, joining your local Men’s Shed might be right for you.

Men’s Sheds have been popping up all over New Zealand. Under the umbrella of the registered charity MENZSHED New Zealand Inc, there are currently 119 Men’s Sheds across the country, with another 21 in development.

At the Men’s Shed Auckland East things have rapidly returned to normal since we moved to Alert Level 1. Auckland East’s shed was formed in 2015 and after a long search moved into its current premises in May 2018. The challenge was then to transform the building into a great space for men to come together.

The men put their heads together and with careful planning, and a bundle of enthusiasm over the next few months, they completed part one of the makeover. They drew on experience from the past professional lives of members Mal and Alan for the design and electrical aspects and a core team of four, Waynne, Peter, Hank and Phil, handled the hands-on aspects.

These men, like many others, prefer to be doing stuff rather than talking about it and the shed has certainly met that need. Along the way they have not only contributed hugely to the shed and the community through the shed’s projects, but they have also made a bunch of new friends. The members of Auckland East’s Men’s Shed all stayed connected during the COVID-19 lockdown through Zoom meetings three times a week.

Peter attested to the social aspects of the shed, “I have found the Shed to be a friendly place where I can meet others from different backgrounds and learn about their life experiences.”

Although the sheds aren’t exclusively for seniors, they have become very popular with retirees. Phil said the shed gave him a purpose, “The pending question for seniors who are about to retire is they ask of themselves, “what am I going to do?””

Men’s Sheds provide a huge amount of value to their members and their community. To find your local shed and find out about joining go to [www.menzshed.org.nz](http://www.menzshed.org.nz)

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**Money Talks**

COVID-19 has put a lot of financial pressure on all kinds of New Zealanders. Most people are changing their spending habits or considering how this downturn in the economy will impact them in the long-term.

Talking about money can be uncomfortable, especially if your circumstances have changed. It can also be hard to know who to ask for help.

MoneyTalks is a free financial helpline that offers over-the-phone budgeting support. Their services are confidential and non-judgmental.

Whether you are looking for some guidance for your retirement planning or if you are already struggling to pay your bills, it’s never too late to get started. MoneyTalks are there to help and are just a phone call away.

Researching and finding out the different benefits that you are entitled to can be a time-consuming and stressful process. MoneyTalks can also help you to work out what benefits and support you might be entitled to.

They can also put you in touch with a local service provider for further face-to-face help from a Financial Mentor, who can work through your finances with you to develop a budget.

You can contact MoneyTalks by

- Phone: 0800 345 123
- Text: 4029
- Email: help@moneytalks.co.nz

For more information on MoneyTalks you can go to their website [www.moneytalks.co.nz](http://www.moneytalks.co.nz)

MoneyTalks is provided by FinCap and funded by the Ministry of Social Development
Residential Care Subsidy changes

On 1 July 2020, some key annual changes to the Residential Care Subsidy came into effect.

If you need long-term residential care in a rest home, you may now qualify for the Residential Care Subsidy. The asset thresholds have increased to:

- $236,336 for a single person
- $236,336 for a couple where both partners are in long-term residential care

The income-from-assets exemptions have increased to:

- $1,027 for a single person
- $2,054 for a couple who are both in long-term residential care
- $3,081 for a couple where one partner is in long-term residential care.

Your assets and income will be assessed by Work and Income.

All other eligibility is assessed by the Ministry of Health. To find out if you are eligible, go to the Work and Income website at [www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz)

Community Connects grants open

The 2020 funding round for Community Connects grants is now open.

Community Connects grants help fund projects that promote the inclusion and contribution of older people in community life and support their community to prepare for an ageing population.

The fund makes one-off grants of up to $15,000. The grants are open to any New Zealand council, community organisation, or registered non-profit organisation and must be supported by their local council.

Last October was our most successful round yet, with nine groups awarded funding to make their communities more age-friendly.

The successful groups were Age Concern Wellington, Age Concern Auckland, Alexandra Community House, Alzheimer’s Otago, Connect the Dots, Coromandel Independent Living Trust, Dementia Wellington, Hutt Timebank and Waitaki District Council. The projects funded include creating Local Area Networks to reduce loneliness and social isolation, undertaking a community assessment, and developing an age-friendly community plan.

Don’t miss out, applications for the current funding round close on 9 October 2020.

For more information on Community Connects, including eligibility criteria, go to our website [www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz](http://www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz)

If you see or suspect elder abuse, please, speak out about it.

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0800 EA NOT OK
0800 32 668 65
SuperGold Card special offers

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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.