



Te Rōpū Kaitohutohu Take Kaumātua

# Seniors Advisory Panel

A summary of the Panel's aims and achievements during the 2022 – 2025 term.

## End of Term Report 2022-2025.

11 September, 2025



Nau mai, Haere Mai, Talofa Lava, Malo e Lelei, Ni Sa Bula, Faalalofa Lahi atu, Kia Orana, Ni Hao, Annyeonghaseyo, Salam, Namaste and Greetings.

## **Demographic Advisory Panel Member's Role:**

Panel members advise Auckland Council's Governing Body, policy teams, staff teams, and organisations on many significant regional policies, plans and initiatives that affect the daily lives and wellbeing of New Zealanders, now and for future generations. Their involvement helps Council members and staff understand the perspectives of Auckland's diverse communities, and helps ensure that political decisions, organisational actions and service delivery meet the needs of all Aucklanders and harness the opportunities diversity brings. The aim is that by developing strong, collaborative and professional working relationships with Council members and staff and between Panel members, everyone will be enabled to perform their role to the best of their ability.

Auckland Council is the largest council in Australasia, representing more than 1.7 million Aucklanders, and stretching from Te Hana in the north to Franklin in the south. It has a total proposed operating expenditure for 2023/24 of \$5.3 billion. Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland is New Zealand's youngest and most ethnically diverse region with over 200 ethnicities. By 2038, Māori, Pacific, and Asian peoples are projected to make up a majority of the city's population. As communities have grown, socio-economic pressures, sense of belonging and inclusion, and support for new migrants have remained challenges, and there are low levels of participation in many civic activities across some community sectors. Demographic Advisory Panels are one way to help Auckland Council understand and meet these challenges and opportunities. And Panel members take their experiences and new knowledge back to their diverse communities, encouraging and enabling their participation in creating a better future for our city.

## Members of the panel

### Co-Chairs:

- Dr Claire Dale
- Susanne Tapsell

### Panel Members:

- Fia Turner
- Gavin Jones, MNZM
- Gayle Marshall, QSM
- Janis McArdle
- Leigh Featherstone
- Lindsay Waugh.
- Zari Fazelnia

Note: two panel members resigned during the term, Prof. Edwina Pio Co-Chaired until October 2024 when Susanne Tapsell was elected, and member Bruce Davies, JP until June 2025.

### Supporting Staff:

- Co-Lead Officers – John Nash and Kathryn Hickling
- Governance Advisor – Phoebe Chiquet-Kaan
- Principal Advisor Panels – Victoria Wicks-Brown

### Elected Members:

- Liaison Councillor – Councillor Alf Filipaina
- Chief Liaison Councillor – Councillor Julie Fairey

## **Seniors Advisory Panel's Chosen Priorities, Actions and Achievements**

In addition to engaging with Auckland Council staff and community groups and providing feedback on projects, plans and issues brought to them, the Panel has chosen the five following priorities, and provides here some notes on their actions and achievements.

### **1. Tāmaki Makaurau Tauawhi Kaumātua Age Friendly Auckland Plan implementation.**

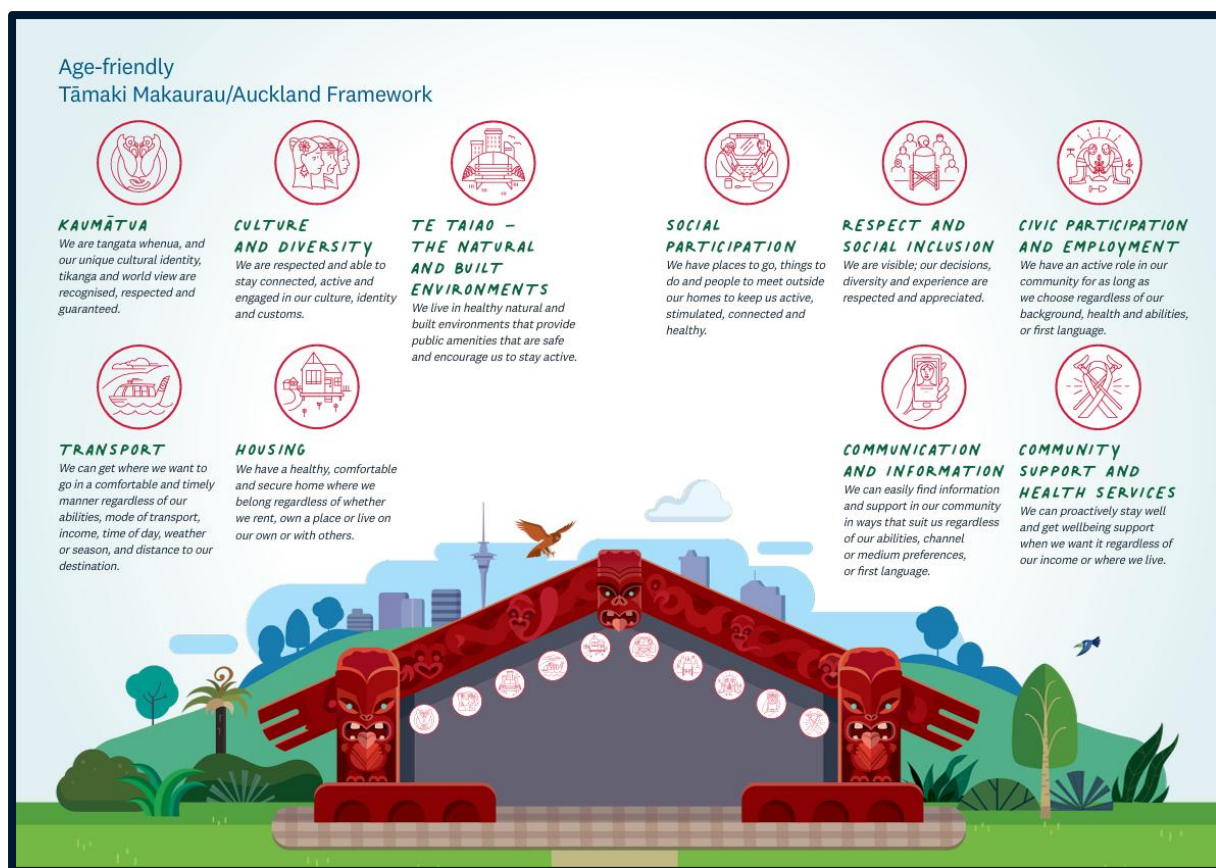
Auckland's population, like most of Aotearoa's population, is ageing. It is expected that those aged 65 years and over will increase to a projected 19% by 2038. [In 2024](#), the proportion of people 65 years and older was 13.1% in Auckland, versus New Zealand overall being 16.5%. The proportion of young people (0-14) as 18.9% compared with the national 18.5%. Work by the first Seniors Advisory Panel led to the Age Friendly Auckland (AFA) Plan being accepted into the WHO in March 2022. As the population projections and the age-friendly guidelines indicate, for a city to be age-friendly, it needs to function well in meeting the needs of all ages.

The AFA Plan's aims are:

- to improve the wellbeing and quality of life for older Aucklanders by creating an inclusive, age-friendly city;
- to future-proof our region given the rapid growth in numbers of those aged 65+; and
- to identify and guide action to support those most in need.

The Plan draws on Māori concepts (e.g. manaakitanga, wairuatanga) and World Health Organisation's Age-friendly Cities Framework, and highlights the unique cultural identity of Māori kaumātua and the growing diversity of Auckland's senior population.





Auckland Council established Te Rōpū Whakamana ki te Ao, the Age-friendly Auckland Implementation Group in 2023. Two Seniors Advisory Panel members sit on Te Rōpū. Auckland Council staff managing Te Rōpū regularly attend Panel meetings to update the Panel on progress and achievements. A main contribution towards an age-friendly Auckland is the annual public symposium for report-back and celebration.

The Panel is concerned that no Local Board representatives attend these meetings, although the 2024 Annual Report shows Local Boards are the ‘Action Owners’, of approximately 37 actions. NGO’s own approximately 41 actions, and ‘Other’ Council departments own approximately 22 actions. Action Owners are responsible for delivery, but many of the actions are described in the 2024 report as either: stalled, No Info, or progressing, and little information is provided around completion dates.

The Panel has regularly discussed possible ways to increase the scope, visibility and reality of Auckland’s age-friendliness. A small team hui after the June 2025 Panel meeting proposed actions to be recommended for adoption at the August Panel meeting:

- a) To develop a strategic plan for Seniors Advisory Panel that aligns with AFA direction and outlines how to work well with Local Boards to support creation and completion of their AFA actions;
- b) to lobby local boards and Auckland Council for funding a dedicated AFA co-ordinator to work with Council, local boards, Action Owners and AFA National Network (Office for Seniors); and
- c) add a standing item to the Seniors Advisory Panel agenda for AFA so Panel members can bring relevant issues to the meeting for the Panel's AFA representatives to consider referring within AFA at Council. Such items would need to be consistent with the AFA strategic purpose and directly related to Auckland Council functions and responsibilities.



## 2. Housing:

Where we live and what we live in plays a major role in our health and wellbeing. Depleted stocks of Senior Housing, rising rents, increasing house and apartment costs and trends to large, largely unaffordable retirement villages, are increasingly locking seniors out of the housing market. Auckland Council plays a significant role in establishing the planning and policy framework for housing (including social housing) and being a housing provider via its partnership with Selwyn in Haumaru Housing.

The Panel lobbies strongly to the council and Central Government representatives and CCOs regarding the urgent and comprehensive action required to address the looming crisis in senior housing. In March 2024, the Panel met with Auckland Council planners to discuss seniors housing needs including housing design, size, assisting seniors to age in place; and advocating for the provision of housing suitable for seniors to be located on bus routes and within walking distance of shops, community centres, public spaces. In June 2024, the Panel met with Haumaru Housing representatives to identify ways we can work together on housing for seniors.

Staff from Kāinga Ora presented on their mahi, including age friendly Auckland targets and aspects like ensuring at least 15% of all Kāinga Ora public housing new builds are built to Universal Design standards. Also, homes in various new Kāinga Ora developments are dedicated as being suitable for a variety of needs and targeted to older people, including 52 new homes for older Aucklanders in Northcote through a collaboration with Eke Panuku and Haumaru Housing. Nevertheless, the visible increase in the numbers of senior homeless people in both the city and the suburbs requires a more co-ordinated and vigorous response.

In May 2025, Panel members attended the online forum hosted by the Coalition to End Womens Homelessness. That this group have researched the impact on older women as a particular group is of interest to this Panel. The group has highlighted that the emergency housing that does exist is not always appropriate for women and in particular women with disabilities. Both these housing issues are of deep concern to the Panel.

In August, based on these learnings, ['Navigating Housing and Homelessness in 2025'](#) was the keynote presentation at a Professional Development Conference in West Auckland, a hui for people working with clients with a housing or homelessness issue. This presentation included two particularly distressing statistics: New Zealand has the highest level of homelessness per capita in the OECD; and globally, the fastest rate of increasing homelessness is among older people.



### 3. Safety:

Safety covers a range of locations, events and activities. Seniors can feel unsafe in their homes, especially if they live alone as many do, and when out and about in their communities. They can also struggle to get the help they need when safety issues arise. These issues collectively can negatively impact on seniors' health and wellbeing. Such issues were foregrounded in the floods of Auckland Anniversary Weekend 2023.

Emergency Management. Through 2023 and 2024, Auckland Emergency Management (AEM) team, Local Boards, and Fire and Ambulance services met with representatives of the Advisory Panels and community groups to identify weaknesses and possible improvements in future weather emergency responses. As a result of this consultation, Local Board Emergency Readiness and Response Plans were developed that provide clear, practical guidance to help the community prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters like flooding. These Local Plans also provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Auckland Emergency Management, Auckland Council, the Local Board, individuals and communities across “the four Rs of emergency management: reduction, readiness, response and recovery”. Printed copies of the Plan are available in libraries and community centres, and a digital version is on the Auckland Council website.

Discussion with the Panels highlighted some areas requiring immediate attention:

- a) Acknowledge and then break down the barriers faced by disabled people in emergencies, recognising that an ageing population means increasing numbers of people with disabilities.
- b) Ensure communities are aware of the locations of their civil defence centres, and ensure those centres can accommodate people with disabilities, mothers with babies and small children, and non-English speakers.
- c) Ensure multi-story apartment dwellers and managers have an emergency plan. This was completed at a separate meeting between Panel representatives and the central area Community Resilience and Recovery Advisor at Fire and Emergency New Zealand. Auckland Emergency Management in August 2024.

Public Transport. Sadly, safety on public transport is also increasingly an issue, not only from other passengers, but from careless and thoughtless drivers. The Panel strongly recommended that passenger care and safety be included in bus driver training, and requested assurance that this change was adopted by bus companies.



Safety and Accessibility in the CBD. After a discussion paper on safety and accessibility was presented at the April 2024 meeting, a further exercise and paper created by Panel members was circulated ahead of the August meeting which identified safety and accessibility challenges, hazards, risks, issues and positive surprises experienced by seniors navigating the Auckland CBD. The stated assumption of this exercise was that matters of safety and accessibility identified in the CBD may also be found in the other main centres in Tamaki Makarau. After this exercise, shared widely within Council, the 2025 version of [The Auckland Design Manual](#) contained a similar videoed walking tour of the CBD.

Dogs. Another concerning issue is the number of roaming off-leash dogs in streets and parks. Proposed changes to dog walking policy and bylaw were presented by Auckland Council staff, and the Panel recommended limiting the number of dogs that may be walked on a leash in an on-leash area, and off a leash in an off-leash area. The Panel recommended that dog walkers be required to be licensed, so they do not put people at risk when they are walking, for example, 12 dogs in a public place.



Digital Literacy. Rapid technological change is impacting communities in multiple ways. The widespread closure of local bank branches and increasing reliance on online banking for all transactions has put many seniors who are not digitally competent and/or not digitally equipped, at risk. Libraries and community centres provide critical support and learning hubs. Many Local Boards support organisations like [Digital Seniors](#) which provide free upskilling opportunities, but a significant risk remains, and online scams continue to inflict great damage to retirement plans.

#### **4. Access to Services:**

Despite seniors being an increasingly larger percentage of the population, decisions on access to services are made mostly by younger people and the needs of seniors can easily be overlooked.

Community facilities Libraries and community centres remain the main places where seniors can easily access information in a safe environment and these cannot be allowed to close or be less available. The guiding principle of age-friendly is that when something is good for seniors it is good for all ages and abilities. When we make Auckland more accessible and attractive for older persons, we make it more accessible and attractive for everyone.

Bus-stops are increasingly raised as an issue: their location, whether shelter is provided, and their proximity to connecting bus services. The Panel provided feedback on the identified accessibility constraints to services in Auckland, in particular the hospital bus no longer stops on the same wharf as the Waiheke Ferry. Co-chairs from the Seniors Advisory Panel and Disability Advisory Panel met with the CE's and staff from Auckland Transport and Eke Panuku to discuss issues in those CCO's scope of strategic interest to the Panels, including addressing the Waiheke Local Board's concerns. In response, AT advised the bus cannot safely and practically operate from the wharf, although taxis proliferate on the other side of the terminal. AT advocated using the total mobility discount, acknowledging difficulties with peak demand.

Total Mobility Card Issues around the difficulty of accessing a Total Mobility Card were raised after AT updated the Panel on a recent public survey at the May meeting. Concerns were raised about the survey methodology and its bias towards technologically literate; driver (taxi and bus) behaviour and education as there were known occasions of bus drivers querying evidence of need and challenging the right for support person/PlusOne companion to travel; and trip limits on taxis with preferred drivers (specifically Auckland Co-op Taxis). An additional issue was vision

impaired people missing busses because they didn't stop at the head of the queue. A further issue was raised at a later meeting around the difficulty of accessing a TMC, and the apparent lack of knowledge of the process by purported approvers and providers.

Parks A December 2024 presentation from Auckland Council staff sought feedback on mapping and accessibility for parks. The need for facilities for adults to sit and play to be integrated with and adjacent to childrens' playgrounds was discussed. Another issue raised was accessibility, for example the different requirements for walkers versus wheelchairs for gradient and smooth paths, and the necessity for wayfinding boards providing the relevant information. Also noted: many older people do not find digital interactive media helpful, so static signs at parks and on print-outs of maps are necessary. Parks, playgrounds and public spaces are vital for assisting with good mental health when economic and social problems proliferate. It is vital that such places are accessible, safe, well-lit and well-maintained.



5. Transport:

Transport and Access proved to be overlapping priorities. On separate occasions, Seniors Advisory Panel members have attended hui on the Northwest Rapid Transit, the City Centre Plan, and the City Centre Parking Management Plan. The Panel provided feedback on the Consultation Process for Auckland Transport’s Draft Regional Land Transport Plan.

Parking A main concern for the Panel has been the removal of or reduction in Disability Parking spaces around public spaces and venues. As well as the importance of continued availability of parking for residents, visitors and deliveries, there is also the need for the City Centre to be more pedestrian friendly, to reduce bus delays due to congestion, to ensure efficient bus lanes, and to keep improving access to the city centre by public transport.

At the March presentation from Auckland Transport, Panel members were concerned that the draft Room to Move i te Pokapū Tāone, City Centre Parking Management Plan, is more concerned with keeping cars out of the city centre than with ensuring access for seniors and less mobile citizens. Little attention has been given to the need for pick-up and drop-off zones beside public spaces and places.

Scooters In a topic that straddles transport and safety, the June 2025 report from the Principal Transport Planner also included the Panel-requested data on e-scooter related accidents in Auckland. Table 4 from that report is included here.

**Table 4: The number of new ACC claims for injuries relating to ‘E-Scooters’ in the Auckland region between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2024, All ages.**

| Year  | New Claims |
|-------|------------|
| 2020  | 520        |
| 2021  | 562        |
| 2022  | 712        |
| 2023  | 921        |
| 2024  | 1,171      |
| Total | 3,886      |

Panel members are concerned that, unlike most other cities globally, Auckland Transport does not require e-scooter riders to be licensed or to wear a helmet, and e-scooters are restricted to the footpath. E-scooters are often seen with 2-up, or with small children tucked in front of the driver, travelling at speed. Unfortunately, no improvement has resulted from the Panel’s efforts.



## Cross Panel Engagement

The Seniors Advisory Panel members have participated actively in Council sponsored workshops for all the Demographic panels, as well as the Co-Chairs meeting regularly. These are an important aspect of Panel activity. They help Panel members to understand each other's particularly challenging priorities and derive support for means of offering advice to Auckland Council, as well as combining our efforts on matters of common interest such as recognising the value of community knowledge in emergency management.

We note the huge value of cross-panel meetings for Co-Chairs, sharing issues, knowledge, understanding and achievements; informing and supporting each other. Such shared knowledge led to a cross-Panel letter to Mayor Brown 13/06/25 outlining our concerns regarding increasing poverty and hardship across Tamaki Makaurau Auckland.

Also, the cross-panel Māori group has provided courage, learning and support for members.

Two Seniors Advisory Panel members have joined representatives from each of the other Panels in contributing to the Elections Working Group, concerned with addressing the extremely low participation in local body elections. The success or otherwise of this initiative will be measurable after the election.



## **Recommended Seniors Advisory Panel Priorities for Next Term**

Age Friendly Auckland Plan. The Panel wishes to continue its role as the kaitiaki for the Age Friendly Auckland Plan. With a growing and increasingly diverse seniors population and the increasingly challenging living conditions for this group, the plan has even greater weight in serving as the overarching lens for how well we are doing in our communities. We have identified the need to engage with greater depth with the measurable goals of the plan.

In addition, we would value a dedicated web page for Age Friendly Auckland Resources, including the Plan, Annual Reports and other relevant resources including research.

Social needs. A crisis is looming in both housing and health for increasing numbers of seniors. It is now vital that we acknowledge that poverty is impacting the wider community: home, health, clothing, school attendance, belonging (ref: Cross-Panel letter to the Mayor 13/06/25).

Where these matters can be ameliorated or resolved by Council engagement via community action, the Panel could provide comment and support. We have an ongoing interest in progressing dialogue around homelessness amongst seniors and the importance of appropriate emergency housing .

Bearing in mind the growth in numbers of seniors it is important that we begin to place dementia at the forefront of our considerations and advice to Auckland Council. The successful AFA film project over this last summer is an acknowledgement by Auckland Council of the importance of community initiatives to meet the needs of dementia sufferers and their whanau.

Accessibility in parks and public spaces. The Panel is interested in the supporting advice to make more of our public spaces, including parks, accessible. In difficult times it is even more important to ensure all parks, playgrounds and public spaces are enjoyable, accessible, easy to navigate, safe and well lit. The work done by Puketāpapa Local Board in 2018 on accessibility in parks and assessing the needs of diverse communities in parks are exemplar.

Rates relief communication. Ensure Local Councils' Rates Relief policies are well publicised. From 2025, the income abatement threshold to be eligible for the maximum Local Government rebate for SuperGold Cardholders and their

households is lifted from \$31,510 to \$45,000 (about the rate for a couple receiving NZ Super). The maximum rebate for the scheme will increase from \$790 to \$805. We note with gratitude the inclusion of Rates Relief information on the recent Auckland Council Rates Demand.

Digital Literacy This is another urgent matter of accessibility and safety. Seniors need to continue to have access to knowledge of digital developments to manage their finances and keep themselves safe from crime. The Panel will wish to continue to engage and advise on this priority.



## **Recommendations for Panel members:**

Start Panel member recruitment earlier, and

- provide greater understanding to Panel members of how Auckland Council works, and
- provide more guidance on the role of Panel members.

Ensure overlap of new and experienced Panel members so acquired knowledge can be transferred.

Ensure Panel members receive feedback on their contribution and value to Auckland Council. Make deliberate efforts to recruit Māori and Pasifica members, and representatives from other growing ethnicity populations.

Public / community events by / with Panels can build general understanding of Auckland Council's roles and functions. Panel members and Auckland Council staff have made significant efforts in the approach to the 2025 local body elections to increase community knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Local Government. The outcome of this effort can be measured by any increase in voter turnout ([2022: 35.4% of registered electors](#)). This needs to be given adequate value as a public education and participation and good governance opportunity.

Finally, thanks to Auckland Council Support Staff for their guidance and friendship, and thanks to Auckland Council for the experience of serving on the Seniors Advisory Panel.

Nāku noa, nā

Auckland Council Seniors Advisory Panel