

20 March 2012

Re: WCC Draft Positive Ageing Policy

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this proposal.

The Architectural Centre supports the WCC's Draft Positive Ageing Policy. We do however believe that consideration of the built environment is a critical aspect of the policy which could be strengthened as a priority area for the Council to focus on and have the following comments to make:

1. As a general comment regarding the section titled "Objectives and Council roles" we believe that the use of the term "Promoting" in most cases could be replaced by the term "Supporting." We believe that the council ought to play a more assertive and active role in ensuring the elderly have a positive relationship with the city, rather than the council simply "Promoting" one.

2. We note the role of the built environment in encouraging activity. Michael Davis (of Studio Pacific Architecture) uses the term "vertical gymnasium" to refer to the opportunities staircases in buildings have in lengthening people's active lives. Building regulations which facilitate the use of stairs rather than lifts ought to be encouraged by the council both for energy savings, but also for the health benefits activity has for Wellington's citizens. Such an attitude which breeds active citizens rather than sedentary cabbages needs to underpin this and other council policies.

3. Much planning has prioritised cars, and more recent is gradually considering buses, pedestrian and cyclists. As we age other vehicles become important. We suggest the inner city also be planned to accommodate mobility scooters, possibly lane ways for scooters rather than cars? More of us will be older and scootering and the council must anticipate this.

4. Another aspect of public transport is adequate infrastructure for waiting passengers. The elderly are particularly susceptible to the negative impacts of the cold, wind and rain. A council who really cares about its older citizens will ensure that bus shelters and the anticipated transfer stations will provide comprehensive shelter from wind, rain and cold weather. The evidence on the streets suggests that this is not some thing the current council loses sleep over - it should.

5. Many elderly play a critical role in the voluntary economy. This is a vital support infrastructure from which the city benefits. Recognition and support (rather than simply promotion) at a council level of this important contribution is something we believe ought to be part of the council's policy regarding positive ageing.

6. The physical aspect of the built environment is the easy bit to engage with. The Architectural Centre also believes in the significance of the impact the built environment has on our mental health and well-being. This is an aspect of ageing which the current policy is deficient in. The provision of a walkable city, with sheltered corridors and cheery open spaces can't be a bad thing ...

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on this proposed Postive Ageing Policy. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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