

Briefing to the Incoming Minister

Seniors

February 2023



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



Te Tari Kaumātua
Office for Seniors

Contents

Your Portfolio.....	1
The Office for Seniors	1
Communications and Stakeholder Engagement.....	1
Support from MSD	2
Appropriation	2
Government Strategies for an Ageing Population	4
Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua.....	4
Age friendly Cities and Communities	5
The Older Workers Employment Action Plan	6
The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing.....	6
Other Portfolio Responsibilities	7
SuperGold Card	7
Tackling Elder Abuse	7
Aged Care Commissioner	8
Links to Other Portfolios	9
Elder Abuse	9
New Zealand Superannuation and income support.....	9
Mahi Aroha: Carers’ Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023	10
Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan	10
2022 Review of Retirement Income Policies.....	10
Community Connectors.....	11
Building Financial Capability.....	11
Context	12
Demographic Change	12
Older people make a significant economic contribution.....	13
Attitudes towards older people are largely positive	13
A group of older New Zealanders experience significant hardship and overlapping vulnerabilities.....	14
Older people’s housing situation is changing	14
The Ageing Workforce.....	15
Technology is changing how older people live	16
2023 Work Programme	17

Supporting Digital Literacy 17

Understanding experiences of vulnerability and multiple disadvantage 18

Supporting Senior Entrepreneurship..... 18

Supporting Homeshare 19

Decisions that require early attention 20

Key Contacts 21

Welcome to the Seniors portfolio

This briefing provides an overview of your portfolio. It explains how the Office for Seniors – Te Tari Kaumātua (the Office) and Ministry of Social Development – Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora (MSD) support you. It summarises the key strategic issues in your portfolio, including focus areas and immediate issues.

We look forward to discussing how we can support you and your priorities.

Your Portfolio

The Minister for Seniors portfolio was established in 1990 to advocate across government on issues that impact older people. You lead the implementation of the Strategy to prepare for our ageing population - Better Later Life He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 - and its Action Plan.

A significant part of your role is promoting action on and accountability for older people's issues in the policy, services and practice of these areas. This work includes influencing your fellow Ministers and community stakeholders that support the needs and issues of older people.

The Office for Seniors

Administered by MSD, the Office for Seniors has 11 full-time staff led by Director Diane Turner.

The Office supports your portfolio by:

- advising on the rights and issues of older people
- managing the implementation of the Better Later Life He Oranga Kaumātua 2019–2034 Strategy
- leading the Age friendly Aotearoa New Zealand programme
- promoting and encouraging digital literacy for older people
- raising awareness about elder abuse and promoting the Elder Abuse Response Service
- supporting your advocacy for older people and understanding of issues they experience

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

Your role involves extensive engagement with older people and sector stakeholders.

To support you, the Office maintains extensive networks and communication channels. These include:

- social media channels
- a website

- a bi-monthly newsletter sent to over 440,000 people on New Zealand Superannuation (NZS), and a sector newsletter sent to more than 1,300 organisations and stakeholders
- face-to-face presentations at local and national events.

Support from MSD

The Office works closely with a range of government agencies that provide services for older people. Our primary work is with groups within MSD:

- The International, Disability, and Generational (IDG) Policy Group is responsible for policy development and advice on various retirement income and social policy issues. IDG is accountable to the Minister for Social Development and Employment. With agreement from that Minister, they can also support your portfolio and provide policy advice on critical issues.
- MSD Service Delivery administers NZS the Veteran's Pension and other benefits. They provide specialised support through Seniors Case Managers. They also manage the SuperGold Card scheme, which offers concessions and discounts for seniors.
- The Māori, Communities and Partnerships Group contracts providers to deliver community programmes, including the Elder Abuse Response services, Building Financial Capability programmes and Navigator services that support people to access Government services.

Appropriation

You are the appropriation Minister for the following departmental appropriations within Vote Social Development:

Promoting positive outcomes for seniors

This appropriation is limited to providing information and facilitation to protect the rights and interests of older people, to promote local community involvement in senior issues, and ministerial services.

In the 2022/23 financial year this is \$2.6 million.

Enhancement and Promotion of SuperGold Cards

This appropriation is limited to promoting, enhancing and delivering information about the SuperGold and Veteran SuperGold cards, and enlisting businesses to provide discounts to SuperGold cardholders.

In the 2022/23 financial year this is \$1.7 million.

You are also the appropriation Minister for the following non-departmental appropriation within Vote Health:

Aged Care Commissioner

This appropriation is limited to the functions of the Aged Care Commissioner.

In the 2022/23 financial year this is \$2.023 million

Government Strategies for an Ageing Population

Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua

Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua provides the strategic direction for New Zealand’s growing older population. It identifies and addresses the needs and aspirations of older New Zealanders now and into the future.

It requires central and local government, non-government organisations, businesses and communities to work in a more co-ordinated way to achieve better outcomes for older New Zealanders.

The Strategy identifies five key areas for action:

- Achieving financial security and economic participation
- Promoting healthy ageing and improving access to services
- Creating diverse housing choices and options
- Enhancing opportunities for participation and social connection
- Making environments accessible

Budget 2021 included \$490,000 to implement the Strategy, and Budget 2022 included \$1.062 million for the 2022/23 financial year.

First Action Plan 2021 – 2024

In September 2021, the Minister for Seniors launched the first Action Plan for the Strategy, covering actions to 2024. The plan focuses on central government actions, prioritising:

- Employment
- Digital inclusion, and
- Housing.

Our progress on the plan has been strong, including:

- publication of an “Age friendly urban places” guide for local and central government planners
- launch of the Older Workers Employment Action Plan
- funding for elder abuse prevention initiatives from eleven organisations throughout the country, including a University of Otago study on improving the identification of abuse, and the national Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura Outing Violence survey to understand elder abuse experienced by Takatāpui and Rainbow Elders

Much of the work to implement the Action Plan sits within the remit of your Ministerial colleagues. Key activities for 2023 include:

- MSD analysis and advice on support options for disadvantaged jobseekers aged 65+

- a Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) work programme to assess how better regulation could support the construction of accessible buildings
- a Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) legislative review of the Retirement Villages Act 2004
- distribution of \$6.3 million of new funding for elder abuse prevention initiatives under Te Aorerekura - the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence

Better Later Life Governance

You Chair a Ministerial Steering Group that oversees the implementation of the Better Later Life Strategy and Action Plan. Other member Ministers are:

- Minister for Social Development and Employment
- Minister of Housing
- Minister for the Digital Economy and Communications

The Steering Group quarterly to assess quarterly implementation reports prepared by the Office.

Cabinet agreement to the Strategy in 2019 [CAB-19-MIN-0487] mandated reports on its implementation every two years. A second update is due to Cabinet in 2023.

Indicators to track long-term progress across the Strategy's five areas for action were developed in 2019 and updated in 2022.

Age friendly Cities and Communities

The Office for Seniors leads work to make cities, communities, facilities, places and spaces Age friendly and accessible.

New Zealand is an affiliate of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. The Office is responsible for fulfilling the New Zealand Government's affiliate member obligations, including promoting the age friendly approach and fostering Age friendly communities and environments through the Age friendly Aotearoa New Zealand Programme.

The Office provides advice and resources to councils and community groups, as well as a small annual grant round to support local initiatives. We also advocate across government, encouraging agencies to adopt an age friendly approach in their policies and developments.

The Office engages with about 15 local authorities as part of the New Zealand Age friendly network. Five of these (Nelson, Gore, Auckland, New Plymouth and Hamilton) are also part of the WHO Age friendly cities and communities network.

The Older Workers Employment Action Plan

The Older Workers Employment Action Plan (OWEAP) is one of seven population employment action plans that support the implementation of the Government's Employment Strategy. It was developed by the Office in collaboration with the Ministries of Social Development and Business, Innovation and Employment. The plan complements the Better Later Life Strategy and Action Plan.

The OWEAP focuses on people aged 50 and over and includes 11 actions with a focus on training and upskilling, finding and staying in work, supporting employers to be more inclusive, and planning for the effects and opportunities of an ageing workforce.

Implementation of the OWEAP is led by the Ministry of Social Development, reporting to you as the responsible Minister. The OWEAP was released in April 2022, and there has been progress on all actions.

The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing

In December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution to declare 2021 to 2030 the Decade of Healthy Ageing. Actions are divided into four areas:

- **'Combatting Ageism'** which aims to change how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing
- **'Age friendly Environments'** which aims to facilitate the ability of older people to participate in and contribute to their communities and society
- **'Integrated Care'** which aims to deliver integrated care and primary health services that are responsive to the needs of the individual
- **'Long term care'** which aims to provide access to long-term care for older people who need it.

The Decade will require collaborative action from governments, civil society organisations, international agencies, academics, the media, and the private sector.

The Office is working with the Ministry of Health to develop our response to the Decade of Healthy Ageing, following the completion of a stocktake of cross-government actions.

Several central government-led initiatives will contribute to the Decade's Member State Actions, some of which sit outside the Better Later Life Action Plan and the Healthy Ageing Strategy Priority Actions (led by the Minister of Health). We will consider how to leverage the Decade to encourage and enable cross-sector and community action.

Other Portfolio Responsibilities

SuperGold Card

The Minister for Seniors had been delegated responsibility for the appropriation for promoting, enhancing and delivering information about the SuperGold and Veteran SuperGold Cards and enlisting businesses to provide discounts to SuperGold cardholders. You have responsibility for enhancements to the SuperGold Card. The Minister for Social Development and Employment is responsible for the policy and appropriation for assessing entitlement and issuing the card.

There are 839,556 SuperGold cardholders. Users have downloaded the SuperGold App over 225,000 times, and visited the new SuperGold website 2.5 million times. 5,847 SuperGold business partners offer discounts through 11,163 business outlets nationwide.

Waka Kotahi - New Zealand Transport Agency funds off-peak public transport discounts for SuperGold Card holders.

From April 2023, the Community Connect programme will offer a 50% concession on public transport for all Community Services Card holders. 333,078 people with the SuperGold and Community Services Card will be eligible for both concessions, supporting older people on low incomes to access public transport.

Tackling Elder Abuse

As many as one in ten older people in New Zealand will experience some kind of elder abuse. Most abuse goes unreported. The numbers of people experiencing elder abuse and physical and emotional neglect will likely grow as our older population increases.

The Office works with Te Puna Aonui,¹ the Ministry of Social Development and other agencies to reduce the prevalence of elder abuse and to ensure that those experiencing abuse are well supported. The Office uses its extensive networks to raise awareness and promote the national elder abuse helpline.

Since 2017 the Office has led national awareness activities on elder abuse. Our campaign activity usually leverages international World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), with the resources used throughout the year on owned and earned channels. With support from MSD the Office will run a campaign in June 2023 to coincide with the annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (15 June).

¹ Te Puna Aonui is an Interdepartmental Executive Board responsible for implementing Te Aorerekura – the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence. It involves a total of 14 government agencies.

The Office also supports initiatives focused on elder abuse prevention. This financial year eleven organisations have been funded through a one-off grants round to undertake a range of initiatives aimed at preventing elder abuse.

Working with Te Puna Aonui, we are developing a national network to support diverse older people to participate in the implementation of the national strategy and action for family and sexual violence, Te Aorerekura.

Aged Care Commissioner

Carolyn Cooper was appointed as the first Aged Care Commissioner in March 2022. The Commissioner will monitor how well the health and disability system responds to the needs of older people (particularly those vulnerable to poor health outcomes). The role is located within the office of the Health and Disability Commissioner. It complements the work of other agencies focusing on older people's well-being, such as the Office for Seniors, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman.

Aged care services within the Commissioner's remit include needs assessment, rehabilitation and home and community support services as well as care delivered in aged residential care facilities.

You are responsible as Minister for Seniors for appointments to the role of Aged Care Commissioner and for the appropriation that supports the position, which sits within Vote Health (administered by the Ministry of Health).

Links to Other Portfolios

Elder Abuse

MSD's Elder Abuse Response Service (EARS) includes a free national helpline that triages support to regional providers. Between July 2021 and 30 June 2022, the Elder Abuse Helpline received over 2,919 contacts (calls, emails and SMS). Regional EARS providers manage around 4200 referrals a year. Data strongly indicates older people are reluctant to report abuse, with most contacts by concerned third parties.

New Zealand Superannuation and income support

MSD is responsible for the policy and administration of NZS payments for all New Zealand citizens and permanent residents aged 65 years and over who meet residency requirements.

Ninety-four per cent of New Zealanders over the age of 65 receive NZS or another social security benefit (over 860,000 people). NZS costs around 5% of GDP and is forecast to reach up to 7% by 2060.

NZS provides financial support to people as they age, recognising that a person may not be able to continue to work to generate income.

Veteran's Pension

The Veteran's Pension (VP) is paid to people with qualifying military service who have reached the qualifying Age for NZS and served in a war or emergency. The VP is paid at the same rate as NZS, with some additional support for recipients and their families (including payment upon death of a veteran or veteran's spouse and eligibility for a Community Services Card without an income test).

Additional income support available

Anyone receiving NZS or the VP is entitled to the Winter Energy Payment to help meet the costs of heating over winter. Subject to eligibility criteria, other support available includes the Accommodation Supplement, Disability Allowance and Hardship Assistance. Community Services Cards, rates rebates and support to meet costs associated with Residential Care are also available.

People aged 65+ ineligible for NZS or VP may be eligible for an Emergency Benefit (subject to being ordinarily resident and a test of income and assets).

International Superannuation

MSD negotiates international social security agreements (which are ultimately agreed upon by Cabinet) and oversees policy on the payment of benefits and pensions overseas and overseas government pensions paid to New Zealand residents. MSD manages New Zealand's international obligations and relationships with organisations such as the United Nations and the OECD,

providing advice and support to Ministers for international engagements and travel.

Mahi Aroha: Carers' Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023

Led by the Minister for Social Development and Employment, the Mahi Aroha: Carers' Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023 (Mahi Aroha) was signed by 11 Ministers, including the then Minister for Seniors.

Mahi Aroha is a cross-agency action plan, with multiple government agencies and the NZ Carers Alliance contributing to its implementation. Carers care for friends, family, whānau or aiga members who need assistance with their everyday living because of a disability, health condition, illness, injury, or addiction.

Mahi Aroha aligns with the Better Later Life Strategy – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019–2034 and the Healthy Ageing Strategy 2016, bringing the government and the social sector together to coordinate assistance for older people who are socially isolated or otherwise vulnerable.

Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan

The sector-led Dementia Mate Wareware² Action Plan was published in May 2020 and updated in September 2021. It has four objectives to deliver by 2025:

- Reducing the incidence of dementia mate wareware
- Supporting people living with dementia mate wareware and their family and whānau, and care partners/supporters to live their best possible lives
- Building accepting and understanding communities
- Strengthening leadership and capability across the sector

Budget 2022 included \$12 million over four years for the Action Plan, including delivery of post-diagnostic support trials for new cases of dementia and support for innovative respite care. A Dementia Mate Wareware Advisory and Leadership Group has been appointed. It is supported by the NZ Dementia Foundation under contract to Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand.

2022 Review of Retirement Income Policies

Te Ara Ahunga Ora Retirement Commission reviews New Zealand's retirement income policies every three years and makes recommendations to both the Government and industry.

² Mate wareware is a term often used in Te Ao Māori for dementia. As with the term dementia it refers to many different conditions that affect hinengaro or memory and thinking.

In the 2022 Review of Retirement Income Policies (RRIP), Commissioner Jane Wrightson made recommendations to improve retirement outcomes for specific population groups:

- maintain NZS at current settings to prevent further financial pressure on groups already experiencing retirement income disparities, including women, Māori and Pacific Peoples.
- establish an advisory rōpū to more fully consider issues with respect to Māori raised by Retirement Commission research and lead the development of policy options to present to the Government.
- provide stronger pathways to home ownership through structured financial capability programmes.
- request financial institutions to actively consider a collective approach to borrowing.
- ensure the gender and ethnic pay gaps and occupational gender segregation continue to be highlighted and addressed.
- ensure KiwiSaver contributions are maintained during periods of parental leave.

The Commissioner also made recommendations on how to improve retirement savings and housing policies.

Community Connectors

During the COVID-19 response, MSD established Community Connectors. Based in non-government organisations, these advisors guide clients and whānau to access government services and support. A number of Community Connectors were placed in organisations directly supporting older people.

Sector feedback has emphasised the value of the support provided by these Connector positions to older people in need.

Building Financial Capability

Building Financial Capability is a suite of dedicated services to help New Zealanders manage their finances effectively.

The service helps people reduce their debts and get repayments down to a manageable level. Older people have made good use of the service, with people aged 65+ contacting the service for support 1352 times between July 2021 and June 2022.

Context

Demographic Change

New Zealand's population is ageing, and life expectancy continues to increase. The number of people aged 65+ is growing, while our birth rate has declined since the mid-1970s. Within a decade, New Zealand will have more people aged over 65 than under 15.

There are an estimated 842,100 people aged 65 or over. The population of people aged 65+ rose from 12% to 16.4% of the population between 2001 and 2022. It is expected to reach between 21% and 25% by 2048.

93,500 people are over 85, or 11% of the total population aged 65+. By 2048, the population of people aged 85+ will rise to 277,600; almost 20% of the total population aged 65+.

Our older population is increasingly diverse

The population aged 65+ has become increasingly diverse. StatsNZ projects that since 2018:

- the Māori population aged 65+ has increased by 26% (from 50,100 to 63,100)
- the Asian population aged 65+ has increased by 39% (from 51,000 to 70,700)
- the Pacific population aged 65+ has increased by 25% (from 21,600 to 27,100)

For Māori and Pacific older people this increase has been driven by increases in life expectancy. For older Asian people the increase is likely largely due to net migration.

This increasing diversity means people who make up the older population may have different aspirations and needs as they age. As well as ethnicity, diversity also includes differences in religion, philosophy, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical abilities, mental health, physical health, genetic attributes, personality, and behaviour.

While overall life expectancy continues to grow, there are still disparities for groups such as Māori and Pacific people. Based on figures from 2017-2019:

- life expectancy at birth was 73.4 years for Māori males (up 3.1 years from 2005–2007), and 77.1 years for Māori females (up 2.0 years from 2005–2007)
- the gap between Māori and non-Māori life expectancy at birth was 7.5 years for males and 7.3 years for females. This is down from 8.6 years for males and 7.9 years for females in 2005–2007

- for Pacific males, life expectancy at birth was 75.4 years (up 2.2 years from 2005 – 2007), and for Pacific females 79.0 years (up 1.6 years from 2005 – 2007).

Disability and Ageing

Disability increases as people age. According to the 2013 Disability Survey, 59% of people over 65 have one or more disabilities, with 49% of adults over 65 identified as being physically disabled compared to only 7% of adults under 45.

This group is likely to grow as New Zealand's population continues to age. Similarly, a group of people with long-term disabilities are increasingly moving in to older age.

Considering how health and social services work together to support older people with their loss of capacity while also enabling them to maintain as much independence and autonomy as possible will become increasingly important. The fiscal implications of increased demand for health services will also need to be considered.

Older people make a significant economic contribution

Public discourse on the role of older people in the economy can unduly focus on the fiscal implications of NZS. Since 2015, the Office has published a research series that models the significant economic contribution of older people. The 2021 update indicated that people aged 65+ contributed:

- \$31 billion of consumer spending each year
- \$14 to \$15 billion worth of unpaid or voluntary work
- \$9.7 billion in total taxes (including GST).

Attitudes towards older people are largely positive

In 2021, the Office commissioned research to better understand individual views on how we value age, our outlook as we age, age-related discrimination and our preparedness for an older population. Most respondents (81%) had great respect for older people, while 50% of respondents considered older people to be an asset to society. Only around 10% saw older people more as a burden.

COVID-19 positively impacted perceptions, with 23% of respondents saying the pandemic positively changed their attitude towards older people.

However, negative stereotypes were more prevalent when respondents were asked what they thought of older people. Examples of negative stereotypes are that older people are slowing down, wrinkled, have health issues and are frail.

A group of older New Zealanders experience significant hardship and overlapping vulnerabilities

Recent data from research progressed by MSD and the Social Wellbeing Agency, using the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) estimates that at least 13% of older people in the study population experience hardship across more than one area of life or experience multiple disadvantage. The research measured hardship, or vulnerability, across income, housing, health, social connections and access and began to analyse where combinations of vulnerabilities were most prevalent.

The research identified a complex picture of need:

- the group were most likely to be experiencing vulnerability in the health area paired with compounding vulnerability within the social connection, housing and financial domains
- Pacific, Asian, Māori and MELAA older people were more likely to experience multiple disadvantage with around 23%, compared with 11% for European
- women were slightly more likely to experience multiple disadvantage than men.

The research was based on 2018 data sources so the picture of need is likely to be understated due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current challenges with the cost of living.

Older people's housing situation is changing

A secure and safe place to live is fundamental to someone's wellbeing. Ageing in the community safely and independently can improve physical and mental health.

Promoting "ageing in place" is a fundamental government policy objective. To do so, older people need functional and affordable housing that has good access to services and public transport and that enables them to connect with whānau and the wider community.

Older people are currently more likely than other age groups to own their own home, but there has been a steady long-term decline in home ownership. The proportion of people aged 65+ who owned their home or had it in a family trust was 65.7% in 2018, compared to 70.7% in 2013 and 71.3% in 2006.³

Similarly, the proportion of those aged 65+ paying a mortgage increased from 6.8% in 2004 to 14% in 2018.

More older people will be renting and living alone

³ These figures are based on Census data, and methodological issues mean 2018 data is not fully comparable.

The likely continuation of the trend away from mortgage-free home ownership means that more older people will be renting. Current evidence suggests that compared to homeowners, older renters are likely to experience higher housing costs, lack of security of tenure and poorer quality housing.

We expect the number of people living alone to increase as New Zealand's population ages. By 2034 people aged 65+ will make up 55% of all people living alone.

There is acute housing need among a small, but growing, group

The number of older people on the social housing register or receiving government supports such as the Accommodation Supplement has steadily increased, although older people remain underrepresented within both these groups.

Homelessness is not as significant an issue for people aged 65+ compared to other age groups. However, some older people's homelessness may not present in the same way as others. For example, they may keep a roof over their head by regularly moving between extended family.

More older people may experience homelessness in the future as people aged 45-64 are increasingly experiencing homelessness.

The Ageing Workforce

The labour force is ageing, reflecting increased participation of older workers (those aged 50+) as well as the general ageing of the population.

Older workers make up a third of the labour force and our ageing population means this is the fastest-growing demographic among workers.

Our labour force participation rates for people aged 65+ are higher than other OECD countries because our superannuation is universal and not subject to means-testing and therefore does not discourage people from continuing to work. A quarter of people aged 65+ are in the labour force, compared to 1 in 15 in 1990. Workers aged 65+ currently make up 6.8% of the labour force. This is forecast to increase to 8.5% by 2032.

Employment and volunteering have many benefits for older people, including social integration, better mental and physical health, an increased sense of purpose and access to economic resources.

The economy also benefits. Older workers remaining in paid employment ensure we retain critical skills and support the training and upskilling of a new generation of workers.

Some older workers are disadvantaged in the labour market

Some older workers (aged 50+) face challenges finding and staying in suitable employment. Older workers take longer to find new work if they lose their job and are more likely to have to take a lower-skilled or lower paid role.

Older workers are also over-represented among long-term recipients of MSD jobseeker benefits, and the rates at which they exit benefit receipt in to work lag behind those of younger workers.

Technology is changing how older people live

Digital technology has changed our lives significantly in recent decades, with many Government agencies and businesses moving activities online. The COVID-19 pandemic has fast-tracked this trend and amplified the importance digital communication has in our daily lives.

Older people are less likely to own a digital device or internet connection. A 2019 study found that 25% of those aged 65+ did not have access to the internet, rising to 35% of those aged 75+. This may partly reflect a lack of desire among some older people to be online. In contrast, others may experience affordability barriers or lack the necessary skills to engage online safely.

Research suggests usage, trust, and confidence in using digital devices, as well as essential digital skills diminish with Age. Survey results indicate 33% of people aged 60-69 lack necessary digital skills, increasing to 50% for those aged 70-79 and 79% for those aged 80+.

As technology continues to influence core functions in society, it is essential to support older people to engage online in ways that suit them.

2023 Work Programme

The 2020 Labour Party manifesto includes four "Seniors" commitments. Two of these fall within the Seniors portfolio:

- establish an aged care commissioner, and
- continue to implement the Better Later Life Strategy.⁴

The first of these commitments was met in early 2022 with the establishment and appointment of an Aged Care Commissioner.

The latter commitment continues to progress, and implementation of the first Better Later Life Action Plan will be the primary focus for the Office in 2023. The 31 actions that make up the Action Plan are the responsibility of a range of government agencies.

Four key actions that fall within the responsibility of the Office for Seniors and MSD Older Persons Policy will form a focus through 2023:

Supporting Digital Literacy

In 2019, the Office for Seniors was allocated \$600,000 to deliver The Digital Literacy Training for Seniors initiative. Interim evaluation results show that people who participated in the training course have gained skills and confidence to be online and increased their social connectedness.

The Office has been allocated a total of ██████████ over three years through Budget 2022 to expand the provision of digital literacy support to reach another 5,000 people, with a small provision for digital devices and connectivity.

The new programme will focus on harder-to-reach groups such as older Māori, Pacific and recent migrants. A procurement process is currently underway and we plan to announce this new phase of the programme in March 2023.

Focus on essential skills

To promote consistency in service delivery, the Office developed a framework to help evaluate and improve the effectiveness and quality of digital literacy training programmes for seniors, focusing on essential skills training.

The Essential Digital Skills Evaluation Framework for Seniors Framework (the EDS Framework) has been shared with several government agencies, businesses, and digital literacy training providers.

⁴ The other two "Seniors" manifesto commitments fall within other portfolios. They are to maintain the current entitlement age and relative rate of NZS (Social Development) and support the goals of the Dementia Action Plan (Health).

Aligning the sector

The Office has been working with a group of digital training providers to establish the Digital Inclusion Action Group for Older People (the Action Group). Six providers have agreed to work with us to use and promote the EDS Framework and work collaboratively to increase digital literacy training programmes' reach, impact, quality and consistency.

Understanding experiences of vulnerability and multiple disadvantage

MSD has partnered with the Social Well-being Agency (SWA) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) to progress work in response to two actions under the Better Later Life Strategy and Action Plan relating to the experiences of older people with vulnerability. The work programme is focused on determining whether current services and supports available for older people experiencing vulnerability are adequate and fit for purpose. The work to date has focused on the 65+ cohort and has drawn on quantitative data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) and community engagement.

The first phase of work has prioritised building an evidence base to gain a sense of the size and the characteristics of older people experiencing vulnerability in five key domains or areas of life: finance, housing, health, social participation and access. SWA will be publishing insights from the first Phase in March 2023.

The next phase of work, currently being scoped, will focus on further developing our understanding of the needs of this cohort and considering potential options to assess and improve existing services for this group.

Supporting Senior Entrepreneurship

Self-employment can provide an opportunity for older workers to remain connected to the workforce, offering flexibility, job satisfaction and financial security. One of the eight employment actions included in the first Better Later Life - He Oranga Kaumātua Action Plan 2021 to 2024 is for the Office to "pilot and evaluate an approach to help older entrepreneurs to establish sustainable businesses". The success of the initial pilot in Selwyn in May 2022 led to further Budget allocation to encourage entrepreneurship among older people, including those not currently well represented in entrepreneurial activities, such as older Māori, Pacific Peoples and women.

Following a procurement process in late 2022, we are working to contract several providers to expand the geographical and demographic reach of this pilot. § 9(2)(f)(iv)

A post-pilot evaluation with providers will help us assess the approaches that work best for different populations to guide the future direction of senior entrepreneurship support.

Supporting Homeshare

One of the 11 housing actions included in the Better Later Life Action Plan is for the Office for Seniors to “promote the uptake of shared living arrangements”. Funding was allocated through Budget 2022 to support a pilot Homeshare initiative in New Zealand.

The Homeshare initiative will bring together older people with a spare room and people who are happy to lend a hand around the house in return for affordable accommodation. Every home sharing arrangement is unique – it might include shared cooking, grocery shopping, or household tasks. It encourages people to support one another.

A procurement process is underway now, S 9(2)(f)(iv)

Decisions that require early attention

Below is a list of the key actions and decisions we would like to discuss with you in your first 100 days as Minister for Seniors, in addition to your key priorities.

What	Date expected
Older people, vulnerability, and multiple disadvantage – second phase of work	9 March 2023
Invitations to Better Later Life Ministerial Steering Group	9 February 2023
Communications for Launch of Programmes: Digital Inclusion, Homeshare, Senior Entrepreneurship	23 February 2023

Key Contacts

Simon MacPherson, Deputy Chief Executive, Policy, MSD

[REDACTED]

Diane Turner, Director, Office for Seniors

[REDACTED]

Julia Bergman, General Manager, International, Disability, and Generational Policy, MSD

[REDACTED]

Harry Fenton, Policy Manager, Seniors Policy, MSD

[REDACTED]

