

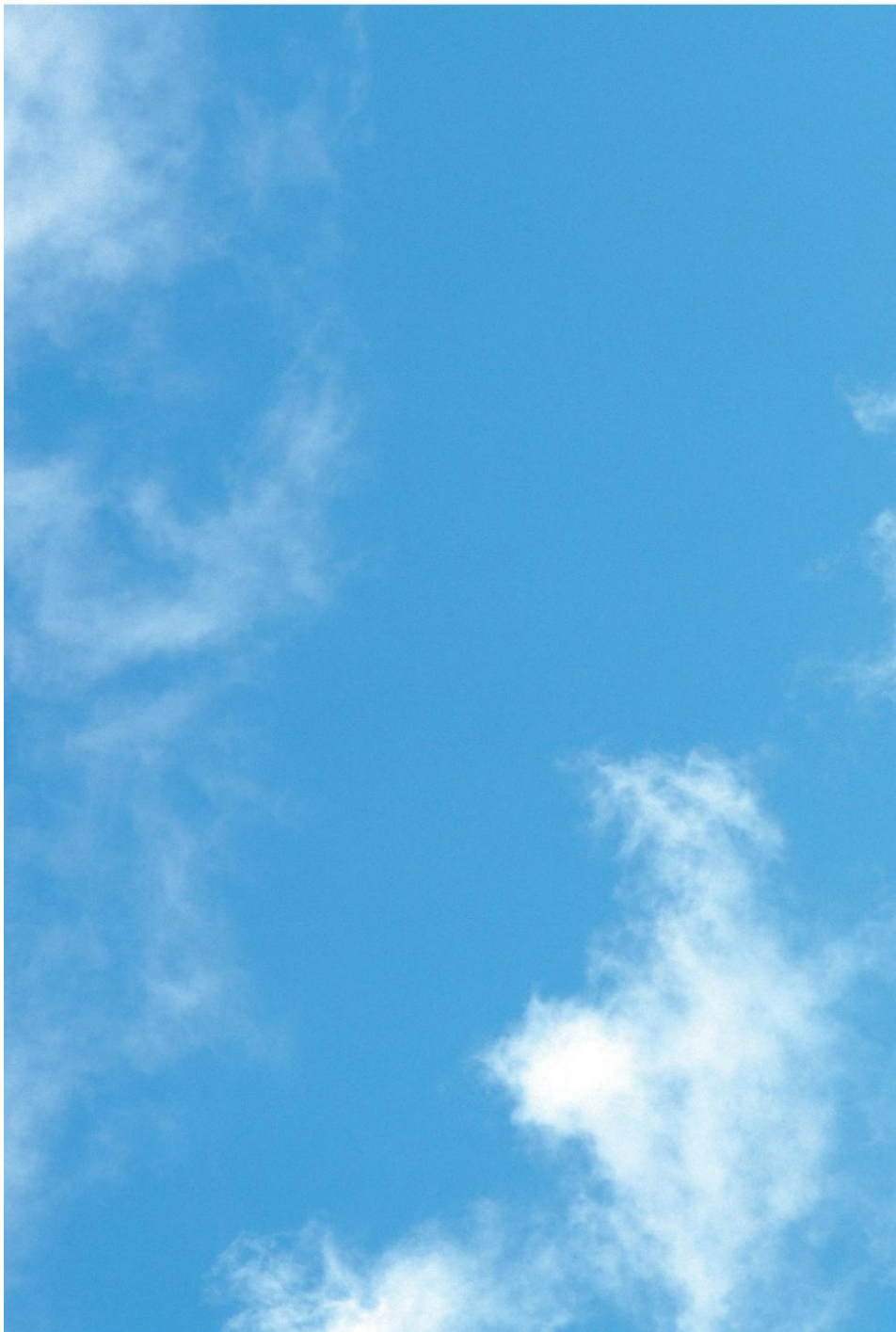


THE UNIVERSITY  
OF AUCKLAND

FACULTY OF MEDICAL  
AND HEALTH SCIENCES

# Resilient Ageing in Place

## Glen Innes Report & Recommendations



# Resilient Ageing in Place

Social and Community Health, School of Population Health

2011 | **Introduction & Principles** | Resilient Ageing in Place

## Introduction

This report arises from an HRC-funded project on Resilient Ageing in Place, which explored the question of 'What is the ideal place in which to grow older?' In the project, more than 120 older people from two communities (Glen Innes in Auckland, and Tokoroa in the South Waikato) participated in workshops, focus groups, and interviews to discuss what elements of their homes, neighbourhoods, and communities enable them to 'age well'. We first outline a set of overarching principles drawn from all the data, and then some background on the Resilient Ageing project. Quotes and ideas from Glen Innes participants are presented, plus the recommendations they made. Many participants appreciated the way they can age in place but also expressed frustration about not being heard by policy makers and service providers; we hope these guiding principles will help turn recommendations into action.

## Principles for Resilient Ageing in Place

These six overarching principles need to frame policy, research and service provision in relation to ageing and place.

1. Emphasise the need to consider ageing in place at **different scales** and in relation to **different sectors** beyond just the level of housing, including neighbourhoods, communities, infrastructure, fiscal policies, and cultural needs
2. Address the issue of **inequalities and inequities** in 'ageing in place' including housing, health, care and support services, finances, transport, cultural amenities, remembering that older people are not an homogeneous group
3. Ensure that policies and strategies prioritise the need for older people to have **choices** for ageing in place. Barriers to there being a range of options need to be addressed, recognising that ageing in place includes private and residential care as well as staying in one's home or community
4. Commit to the need for **partnership** with diverse older people in developing and implementing policies, practices, and research that affect both them and the wider community, recognising the skills and advocacy roles that older people possess
5. Take into account **Māori self-determination** in relation to whenua, tangata whenua, te reo Māori ngā tikanga, marae, urupā, wānanga, whakapapa
6. Incorporate **best-practice national and international guidelines**, including principles endorsed by the United Nations, World Health Organisation, New Zealand's Positive Ageing Strategy and local government commitments in relation to older people.



## Background: The Research Process

The Resilient Ageing in Place project asked diverse groups of older New Zealanders 'What is the ideal place to grow older?' The reason we asked this question is because in recent times there has been a lot of debate about the living conditions of older New Zealanders. The New Zealand population is 'ageing', so as we grow older, *where* and *how* do we want to live? When asked these questions, most older people say that they would like to stay in their communities rather than go into institutional care. This ideal, *community living*, is referred to by the government and policy-makers as 'ageing in place'. So if community living is the ideal, then what makes communities liveable for older New Zealanders?

We asked older people in our two study sites, Glen Innes/Ukutoia<sup>1</sup>, Auckland, and Tokoroa what they thought about these questions. This report provides a summary of the key findings from the focus groups and interviews held in Glen Innes/Ukutoia. The study participants were recruited through local community groups and community networks. As well as interviews and one general focus group, we also held a focus group with older Māori people, a group with older Chinese migrants, and two focus groups with older Cook Islanders living in Glen Innes/Ukutoia. Several of the focus groups were facilitated by older people from the community.

## Why did we use the term 'Resilient' Ageing in Place?

We used the term 'resilient' ageing in place because we wanted to recognise the strengths of older people. As the famous quote goes "old age ain't no place for sissies"<sup>2</sup>, and there are certainly a lot of hard things about getting older, particularly where health is concerned. However, older people are also the "strongest of the strong."<sup>3</sup> After a lifetime of learning how to deal with the good and the bad, older people are amongst the most 'resilient' members of our community. Research shows that while older people often experience more significant hardship than younger people, they also have a greater range of resilience resources. For instance they have more accumulated knowledge and expertise; better skills in life planning, life management, and emotion management; they have a greater sense of self-worth and self-acceptance; they are more flexible and open to change; and they have a wider range of coping skills<sup>4</sup>. So we believe that we need communities, and community living policies that *value*, *protect*, and *enhance* this resilience.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ukutoia is the traditional Māori name for the Glen Innes area. This was the name for the area used by participants in the Māori focus group held at Ruapotaka Marae. Ukutoia means to pull the waka up on to the clay.

<sup>2</sup> Quote attributed to Henry Louis Mencken

<sup>3</sup> Hamarat et al, 2002, pg. 365

<sup>4</sup> Staudinger et al, 1993

## What makes a community liveable for older people?

People talked about four important aspects of community living:

<b>My home</b>	<b>My neighbourhood</b>
<b>My community</b>	<b>My life</b>

### *My home*

People said that it is important to them that they have a choice about where to live, and that their home is affordable and easy to maintain. Most people, whether they are renting or they own their own home, said that they would like to stay in the community. People like the familiarity of their home and section, and those who own their own homes said that they feel proud of the improvements that they have made to their properties:

P1: For me, I like looking at my trees. ... I planted them myself.  
(laughs)

P2: You're quite happy, ay? You're quite happy just looking outside - just like me. (Cook Island focus group)

Many people are Housing New Zealand (HNZ) tenants, and they are living on a low income (either superannuation, or another benefit from WINZ). Several people talked about how grateful they are for income-related rents. They talked about how affordable rent has had a big impact on their quality of life, especially when it comes to saving up a small amount to take holidays every now and then, and to keep doing leisure activities that they love.

Housing New Zealand tenants from the Chinese focus group were the most satisfied with their homes. They said that they felt happy knowing that the homes are built to a high 'government guaranteed' standard. There were a number of tenants from other groups, however, who were less satisfied with the condition of their HNZ accommodation. A number of these tenants raised issues relating to getting necessary household repairs completed:

In times like this, rainy, windy, we have come across this sad situation. One of the kids opened one of the windows and the wind blew open the window and smashed it! I reported it. They said: 'Yes! We will come', a week went by. The wet was still coming in. They kept saying 'Yes' they will come. I fixed it in the end. When they finally came, they asked who fixed it. I said, I did. They think we were going to sit like this, with the rain pouring in? That was that! They went back. (Cook Islands focus group)

For those people who own their own homes, the cost of maintenance is also an issue:

it is a concern for the elderly, once you, once you've been maintaining your house with what savings you've got left and so forth and you get down to nothing. Some people have really uncomfortable lives. (Interview - 'Don')

Most people want reasonably small, easy-care houses and sections, although it is also seen as important to make sure that when friends, family, and whānau visit you have enough room for them. Other important aspects of home design included having no or few steps, railings in the bath and shower, and light fittings that are easy to reach. Several HNZ tenants mentioned difficulties getting a house that didn't have steps:

I said that it would not be suitable for me given the difficulties and pain faced with barriers to walking in this house. They then said, 'oh well you will have to make do with staying where you are at presently. This is the only house available to you'. (Cook Islands focus group)

Despite these difficulties, however, most HNZ tenants said that they would like to stay living in their home, and they were anxious about moving into a resthome, because they would lose their entitlement to a Housing New Zealand house. A resthome would be their 'last stop':

Because we are the tenants of Housing New Zealand, if we go to the rest home, we will pass the contract with the Housing New Zealand, so we can't go back. Last stop. (*Laughing*) ... because we have no private house. ... We are not like Kiwi. Because they have private houses, they can come back have a meeting and to see. Because the rest home is our last stop. (Chinese focus group)

### ***My neighbourhood***

Many people have lived in the area for a very long time, and they had lots of great stories about what their neighbourhoods looked like when they moved in forty of fifty years ago:

The day I moved in I got my car bogged. ... I came down Line Road ... and I had a child, and a cat, a Morris 8 ... and I got bogged, right up to my axels.... I started digging myself out ... and a man from the houses up the back there, like Evandale, he came down. He said 'it looks like you're in trouble, lady'. I said 'well yes, I am', so he dug me out and got me mobile. ... So that was my introduction to Glen Innes. Yes, it's totally different [now] ... where the kindergarten is now, there was a cow bale partly on that section and partly into this next section next door to us. ... No street names. Eight months before we had a street name in the place, and no street lights or anything. No letterboxes, no clotheslines or anything. ... You were really out in the sticks. (Interview - 'Margaret')



Their long history in the area means that they know their neighbourhood well:

[T]he [Council] guy said 'Oh we can't do anything with the Pohutukawa Tree, because it's over 100 years old.' I said, 'Excuse me I saw the lady plant that'. 'So' I said 'it's not a hundred years old!' (Interview – 'Margaret')

People have mixed experiences of their current neighbours and neighbourhoods: Some good, some bad. Many people said that they have great neighbours:

[T]he boys next door come over, they're very good to me. They bring me fish, they love fishing these two boys. So they fillet it and bring me a nice fillet, sometimes scallops. And they grow vegetables and I get tomatoes and things like that. But then I've got fruit trees on my place, so I give them grapes and feijoas and stuff like that, oranges and stuff. So it's nice. (Interview - 'Joan')

There were also many people who have had bad experiences with their neighbours. Both HNZ tenants as well as people who own their own homes said that the high number of HNZ homes in the area means that their neighbours change a lot, which can be stressful, as they never know who they are going to get. A number of people said that they were particularly concerned about drug dealing in HNZ flats, as they said that it makes older people feel unsafe:

I think, where the safety issue comes in, unfortunately, there is quite a few of these complexes, Housing New Zealand, they are selling marijuana. And we bring ... this to the police attention, and they go and search the premises, and they can't find any, so they leave it at that, but we know for a fact that people go and buy it on a regular basis. And this is where, when you talk about safety, I think intimidation; I think that is a word, because a lot of people feel intimidated by the people that is coming to buy drugs. I mean, sometimes we have had break ins what never occurred until this drug dealer arrived. (Interview – 'Vic')

### *My community*

Most people said that they love living in Glen Innes/Ukutoia because they think there is a strong feeling of community pride, and that people are quick to help each other out:

Vic:...[T]hat's what I love about this place, there's so much aroha here, no matter what you ask people. I mean, my mate if he says I'm going down to swimming baths, the first thing I say is do you want a lift? ... And it's not just me, it's *everyone* around our place, if anybody's going anywhere the first thing anybody says is are you okay for a lift? ...

Dot: Well you go to the beach and get a load of mussels, or a load of pipis, you know, I'm forever, or if I go down with the whānau in Waikato and I'll bring back a load of watercress. And I know the ones that like the watercress and so I'll drop it off. I mean you just do.

Vic: I mean that's the sort of thing. We get that around our place. (Focus group)

Overall, most people said that they think Glen Innes/Ukutoia is a good place for older people to live, because it has good public transport, it is easy to walk to the shops or the doctor, and there are lots of opportunities to socialise with other older people:

Vic: Well most people I've talked to, or my friends, they think along the same lines as me. They just love Glen Innes, you know for the cheap shopping and everything. As I say, the proximity of it, and to the beaches and things like that, it's brilliant.

Dot: You can jump a train and get to Sylvia Park.

Vic: Yeah.

Dot: It's all here. ... It's well serviced by doctors and nurses, and shopping, you know. We've got it all really haven't we?

Vic: Mmm, yes.

Dot: So we're lucky. (Focus group discussion)

[S]hopping, medical services and the surrounding environment are all suitable for old-age. ... We all think that as we are old, this place is suitable for us. Why? ... This is a very convenient and easy spot, walking less than five minutes you can find doctors. Shopping for your daily needs is very easy as well. ... So even though my son asked many times, he wants us to move to closer area to them, we didn't go (*Laughing*) (Chinese focus group)

Transport was a big issue, and many people said that they don't actually feel especially old because they can still drive, but that they expect this will change if or when they can no longer renew their license. Most people said that the good public transport services in Glen Innes/Ukutoia (both train and bus services that enable them to get to the central city, Sylvia Park, the beach, and Greenlane hospital easily) are a major advantage of living in the area.

There was quite a lot of discussion about safety and crime. Many people said that they feel like Glen Innes/Ukutoia is not as unsafe as the media makes it out to be. However, many other people also said that they were worried about safety, and most people have experienced crime - usually having their home burgled or tagged:

I think that safety is the most important, the safety of my home because I was raided sometimes by kids and by people with [the] idea of racism. Put[ting] a rod [through] ... my window glass, and knocking on the door early morning and late at night, and ... throw[ing] rubbish in my back yard. (Interview - Chinese participant)

I have actually had my house broken into twice and I've also, at different other times disturbed a man in my house, once in the kitchen and once in my laundry. (Interview - 'Joan')

There was also quite a lot of discussion about the issue of whether it would be good to have areas of housing in the community where older people were concentrated together. The key thing is that people would like to have the choice of different types of living arrangements. During the discussion at the marae, one person said that they thought it was better to have a mix of younger and older people living together:



Open to all! Open to Ngā Hau e whā [[The four winds]]. Have our single parents, or single tamariki [[children]] or rangatahi [[older children]] here, it is unique to mix. (Māori focus group)

However, other people said that they would prefer to live in a housing area with other older people, because they have more compatible lifestyles:

To me, this mixed in young people and old people don't mix, and it never will. Old people they are set in their own ways and they think oh well if we put them with young people, you know, they will bounce off each other. But they don't, it doesn't work like that. The youngsters they are wanting to play music to midnight, 1 o'clock in the morning, and see nothing wrong with that. And the elderly, most of the elderly are in bed by about 9.30 at night. That is the difference. (Interview – 'Vic')

The people in the Chinese focus group talked quite a lot about the advantages of having older people living near to each other, so that they can help each other out:

[W]hat happens in Glen Innes now, people are much dispersed, we live in the government houses, well, most of us do, only a few have got their own, so ... is it possible that these people could be relatively concentrated in a certain place, so it... then we can have activities together, even if somebody is sick, we can take care of each other. It's also easier for public health care providers if they are willing to pay home visits. Now we are dispersed everywhere, it's very difficult to look after us even if they want to. (Chinese focus group)

Not everyone agreed, however. One man said that he hated the idea of a retirement village, because it would be filled with 'old people', and this would mean that you were 'taken out of the community' (Interview – Charlie). Many people, however, would like the option to live in an area with other older people, without having to move into a retirement village. Most people said that retirement villages are financially out of reach for them.

While most people wanted to stay in the community, some people did like the idea of moving into a retirement village. One woman said she thought they would be great for people like herself living on her own:

You've got more chance of meeting people, because they've all got big lounges where you can go. And you can play cards, or you can watch the television. Some of them have got big pianos and they sit and listen. You meet people. If you're in a place like this on your own you can't just hop up and walk down the lawn and greet a lot of people can you? But if you were in a retirement home you can go for a walk through and into the lounge and there's always somebody there to talk to. (Interview - Daisy)

Finally, a number of people talked about the importance of the Ruapotaka marae as a great community asset in Glen Innes/Ukutoia:

I think we're very fortunate in having a marae like we've got, because they're very, very helpful in a lot of ways. They do a lot for the youngsters as well. Because we work in unison with the marae. Well, you know, they let us know what's happening and we let them know what's happening. ('Vic' - Mixed focus group)

Without this awahi [[embracing]] of our marae we have no, this is the only place we can stand and talk our, make our mana [[prestige]]. Nobody can come in that gate. Only us as Māori to say what we want to say. Nobody can come in, the government can't come in here and say 'do this, you do that, you do this'. We say taihoa, you stay out there, we powhiri[[welcome]] you and you come in under our grounds. But it's because this is what this place is, a safety zone for us as Māori to say our piece. (Māori focus group).

### *My life*

As mentioned above, most people said they think that overall Glen Innes/Ukutoia is a great place for older people to live. One woman said that she thought the large numbers of retired people in the community means that they have lots of skills that they can share, and many opportunities to help each other out:

I think we're lucky because we've got a lot of retired people and you can call on their skills to address the situation. And we've found that's very good. Look at John, I mean look what he does. ... He takes two elderly women to the pools down there for exercise, and he takes them shopping. And he paints out tags and, because he's retired, too. So I think that's important in the community, you know, helping one another. ('Dot' - Focus group)

Many people were doing a large amount of voluntary community work. Everyone said that they think that it is really important to keep doing things that you love. Gardening, music, knitting, U3A and other clubs, book groups, travel, volunteer work, and socialising were some of the most important social activities that people talked about. Almost everyone said that they think that it is important for older people to 'keep busy', and to stay involved with their community.

Good relationships with family and friends are also an important part of life. Kids and grandkids are especially significant:

Firstly, my children, and then my grand-children. [I]f ... now I was taken away from my ... daughter and her children. I [would] feel lonely. ... To have them in our home is, bring[s] me life, brings me life. ... I love my grand-children saying: 'Ay papa! Papa!' See! I feel alive! That gives me the life! And to the grand-mother: 'Ay mama or nena' (Cook Islands focus group)

Friendships, however, are equally important:

You need ... friends who don't make you feel old, or enough friends so that when you have those who make you feel old, you can laugh at it! (Interview - 'Don')

Dot: A few of us get together on a Friday, some Friday nights, and we have a few beers and a bit of a laugh, a tuck in, it's good. But it's better than staying at home.

Vic: Friendships are the most important thing. I think friends are the most important thing on earth.

Charlie: Yeah, it is. Yeah

Dot: It is, yeah.

Vic: If you've got friends, when you can just ring up somebody and say look I feel a bit down and out can I come around for a coffee? 'Yeah come around', and they'll cheer you up. (Focus group)

Glen Innes/Ukutoia is seen as a great place to meet other older people, and to socialise together:

Regarding the environment, I've chosen to live in Glen Innes, it's because there are many senior friends we know in this area. We came from thousands of miles away from China. Ten thousands kilometer, right? We never met each other before, now we become friends. ...[W]e as friends can come together often, doing activities together, meeting each other, or organise games, for example playing table tennis, Mahjong, singing, dancing or doing fitness exercise etc. These activities are essential for old people like us. Without these conditions, staying home alone by yourself would be very hard. (Chinese focus group)

However, several groups mentioned the need for more activities for older people (particularly the Chinese and Māori focus groups), and talked about a lack of appropriate venues that older people can use if they want to set up social activities. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the cost of hiring the community hall, which most people felt was stopping older people planning more activities together.

Finally, money was an issue for many people. Most people are living on low incomes, and those who had lost a spouse found it particularly difficult going from two incomes to one. Many people said that you need to learn to be very very good at managing your money:

P1: [Y]ou know, we got to learn to be damn good budgeters, because we only have a dollar, as we are going to make our kai go to two dollars. So, you know, that's how we are, that's how Māori is, they will spend a dollar to put two dollars worth of kai on their plate

P2: Ah, yeah, pick some pūhās,[[sow thistle]] and, yeah, yeah (Māori focus group)

People said that they when they are struggling financially that they aren't always sure of their entitlements from WINZ, and that this is an issue for older people in Glen Innes/Ukutoia. The Cook Island focus groups said that they think the language barrier is also preventing members of their community from accessing their correct entitlements.

## **Participants' recommendations**

These are some of the specific recommendations made by older people who participated in the research in Glen Innes/Ukutoia.

### ***Activities for older people***

- More activities for older people (free or very inexpensive – ie. gold coin donation), including more activities for kaumātua
- People working with older people need training in hospitality – knowing how to make older people feel welcome and wanted

### ***Housing New Zealand***

- Older people need more information about HNZ processes for dealing with repairs and maintenance
- The timeliness of the HNZ maintenance service needs to be addressed.
- There is a need for more HNZ housing that suits the needs of older people – e.g. no stairs, and small, easy care sections
- HNZ to be more proactive about disruptive tenants and drug dealing in HNZ complexes
- Housing New Zealand create areas of housing specifically for older people, so that they can socialise and help each other out more easily

### ***Other housing options***

- Options to try out retirement villages – rent before you buy
- Good housing around Ruapotaka Marae

### ***Council***

- Older people have real input into processes around establishing new liquor outlets
- Free access to swimming pools for older people
- Council returns the land around Ruapotaka Marae
- Fees for the use of the community centre are made more affordable for older people

### ***Work and Income New Zealand***

- Older people need more information about entitlements to support from WINZ
- Older Cook Islanders need an advocate at WINZ who can speak their language

### ***Other***

- The Citizens Advice Bureau has some volunteers who can speak Chinese
- That older Chinese people can access a Chinese-speaking doctor in their local area
- Older Chinese people work together to set up a scheme to share domestic support staff so that they can stay in their homes longer
- There should be regular older people's forums in Glen Innes/Ukutoia attended by government and community agencies where older people can ask questions and discuss any difficulties that they might be having
- Older people need more information about entitlements to home care services

## The way forward

The Resilient Ageing in Place project is part of a longer-term programme of research on ageing in New Zealand conducted by Dr Janine Wiles at the University of Auckland. The results of this research will be used to inform local community groups, councils, and policy-makers about the concerns and priorities of older people in Tokoroa.

### Special thanks

Special thanks to all the participants who agreed to share their thoughts and stories with us. Thanks also to all the people and organisations that assisted us to recruit participants, and organise and facilitate focus groups and feedback meetings. In particular, special thanks to Tess Liew, Charles Zhu, June Tangiia Kiria, Ridgeland Kiria, Georgie Thompson, Mere Kēpa, Liz Kiata, and Te Kaanga Skipper for helping us to organise and facilitate focus groups and feedback meetings. Thanks also to all the people who gave up their time to attend our initial advisory group meetings. Thanks to all our translators: Pine Harrison, Charles Zhu, Wenli Hao, and Edwina and Naomi Strickland and to project team members Professor Ngaire Kerse, Dr Mere Kēpa, Dr Liz Kiata, and Dr Jeanne Reeve. Thanks to the Health Research Council of New Zealand for providing funding for this project.

### References:

- Hamarat, E., D. Thompson, D. Steele, K. Matheney and C. Simons (2002). Age differences in coping resources and satisfaction with life among middle aged, young-old, and oldest-old adults. *Journal of genetic psychology*, 163(3): 360-367.
- Staudinger, U. M., M. Marsiske and P. B. Baltes (1993). Resilience and levels of reserve capacity in later adulthood: Perspectives from life-span theory. *Development and Psychopathology*, 5(04): 541-566.