

## APPENDIX 2: MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT GROWING OLDER

*Ageing is Living Project – Age Concern New Zealand*

*What is Positive Ageing?*

*"Positive ageing is not about how to live longer nor how to avoid growing old. It is about celebrating older age."*

Key factors for positive ageing include:

- Approaching older age with a vision of your needs and how to meet them.
- Having choices and feeling in control of your life.
- Being able to respond and adapt to change.
- Being physically and mentally active.
- Being involved.
- Continuing to learn.
- Feeling secure.
- Having healthy lifestyle habits.
- Having contact with family and friends.
- Gaining satisfaction in the things you do and your relations with others.

Planning and thinking ahead will assist us to enjoy richness and fullness of life as we age.

### Myths and Realities

#### *Myths*

Views of older age and older people are influenced by myths and stereotypes. According to the common stereotypes, older people are seen as mostly frail, ill or disabled and likely to live in institutions. They may also be seen as conservative in their views and approach to life and considered unable to learn new skills or absorb information.

A prevailing myth is that older people are "past it". Another is that of the "greedy oldies", selfishly taking away resources or opportunities from younger people. These views of older people ignore the real contributions that older people make in our community.

#### *Realities*

- Most older people in New Zealand live independently in the community, either alone or with a relative.
- The health of older people is improving. Healthy lifestyles and habits in younger and middle age will increase the likelihood of good health in older age.

- Currently, most older people in New Zealand live on an income of less than \$15,000 a year.
- Older people contribute through voluntary work – 15 % of unpaid work is carried out by older people.
- Older people contribute at home – studies in families show that older people give more support than they receive.
- A growing number of older people are doing paid work, either full or part time.
- Older people can and do learn new skills and absorb new information. Some skills improve with age.
- Older people are not all the same and diversity of opinions, knowledge and skills is highest in the older age group.

### **Promoting Positive Ageing in the Community**

As individuals and as members of groups we can help to bring about change by influencing those who develop policy and make decisions. A society that enables us to age well will be one where:

- Positive attitudes to ageing and older people are encouraged through education, health promotion and intergenerational activities.
- The worth and activities of older people are acknowledged and valued.
- Older people are consulted and involved in planning and design of services, products and facilities.
- Barriers to older people participating are identified and removed.
- Policies on health care, housing, employment and income are developed according to an integrated national plan that ensures all generations have the opportunity to age well.
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Older people have noted the following as being needed:

- Adequacy of income in older age for daily needs, future planning and participation in society.
- Increased opportunities to be involved in social, recreational, physical, educational and creative pursuits, including life long learning.
- Prompt access to health care, reduced waiting times for surgery and sufficient support and rehabilitation services to maintain independence.
- Improved door-to-door services and transport.
- Improved information on services and community support available.
- Research on the needs and experiences of older people.
- Education and health promotion strategies that encourage healthy lifestyle planning and early preparation for older age – socially as well as financially.

SOURCE:

<http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/?/services/positiveageing>