I can’t start this column without talking about the monstrous events that happened in Christchurch last month. My thoughts are with everyone in Christchurch and all those affected. It has been a shock to all of New Zealand because this is not who we are. We are a peaceful nation and we try exceptionally hard to treat each other with respect on a day-to-day basis.

We’ve seen so much love and generosity and response and the good in this has to be that as a nation we come closer together.

Later this month I will release the new draft strategy for an ageing population – Better Later Life - in Auckland.

We have listened to what you told us during our consultation last year and made sure the new draft strategy focuses on what you told us was important to you. It reflects the issues facing the seniors of today, and importantly the seniors of tomorrow.

Just as we are a diverse country and peoples’ needs are different, I know the issues facing older Kiwis are complex and broad, which is why the draft strategy covers five major themes. These are around financial security, health, housing, safety, and social connections and the way our communities are physically built so that they are accessible to all people.

Better Later Life 2019-2034 is a new way forward and will help inform how we look after our older people for the next 15 years and beyond.

It covers issues from housing, health, transport, and diversity. Take a look at the story inside and make sure to have your say when the consultation opens later this month.

We also talk to Senior New Zealander of the Year Dr Bill Glass. Dr Glass has worked in occupational health for over 60 years and has drawn attention to the unseen fatal effects of toxic substances in the workplace.

He was recognised during a special ceremony in February and follows the 2018 recipient, Kim Workman.

If you’re getting NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension, you’ll also get the Winter Energy Payment from 1 May.

Take a read to find out more about the payments rates and the annual adjustment to NZ Superannuation.

Finally, if you are looking for a healthy but hearty meal make sure you check out our Minestrone Soup recipe from the NZ Nutrition Foundation.
Dr Bill Glass has been recognised for his life-long dedication to occupational health in New Zealand by being named the 2019 Metlifecare Senior New Zealander of the Year. For over 60 years he has drawn attention to the unseen fatal effects of toxic substances in the workplace and is behind the creation of the Asbestos Exposure Register. Despite his successes, he said his career started by chance.

He began his career as a house surgeon in New Zealand but decided the late nights didn’t suit so he packed his bags and headed to London. He roomed in a boarding house with other housemates, including the Senior Lecturer in Occupational Medicine at the London School of Hygiene and Topical Medicine. With no other offers he was convinced to meet with the head of the school and was soon accepted into its post-graduate program.

He said one of his most cherished memories from his 60-year career was when he was asked to present the annual James Smiley Lecture in Dublin.

“I was a bit surprised, I was the first occupational physician in the southern hemisphere to be asked to give the James Smiley address,” he said.

“In the morning his widow Elizabeth took me to high-tea at a nice hotel, it was all a bit overwhelming. I had to give the address in the afternoon after lunch—well of course many of the doctors were being honoured so had lunch and a few whiskeys - it wasn’t long until I realised a few in the audience were quietly snoozing.

“The person who wasn’t, was Elizabeth Smiley who was sitting in the front row, very attentive, and asked the first question.”

He said he was surprised but honoured to receive the Senior New Zealander of the Year award.

“It was bit surprising, but it was very nice to get 60 years practice of occupational medicine recognised.”

Last year we asked you to have your say on a new strategy for an ageing population. We have gone through the 469 submissions received and have developed a new draft strategy - Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034.

Its purpose is to drive actions to ensure all New Zealanders recognise older people’s potential and the opportunities of older age. The number of people over the age of 65 is increasing and this trend is set continue.

People are not only living much longer, they are also healthier for longer. This longevity means that we need to rethink the existing ideas around old age and later life.

Minister for Seniors, Tracey Martin, is asking for feedback on the draft strategy and whether it is on the right track in making the future better for New Zealanders as we age.
NZ Super and Veteran’s Pension payments are adjusted each year to reflect increases in the cost of living, inflation and the average wage.

From 1 April payments will increase to:

- $720.84 each before tax or $632.54 each after ‘M’ tax for a married couple who both qualify
- $950.84 before tax or $822.30 after ‘M’ tax for a single person living alone
- $874.28 before tax or $759.04 after ‘M’ tax for a single person sharing accommodation.

The first full payment at the new rate will be on 16 April.

For a full summary of the new rates go to [www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz) and search for ‘benefit rates 2019’.

Wellingtonian Cheryl Cameron knows she can go from being pretty well to really unwell quite quickly, so has thought about what she wants for her future health care.

Cheryl, 73, has Parkinson’s disease, an incurable, degenerative disorder of the central nervous system.

She features in Kia kōrero | Let’s talk, a new campaign that encourages people to plan for their future health care, with a focus on what matters to them. It features the personal stories of six New Zealanders at different stages of life and wellness.

Advance care planning is a way to help you think about, talk about and share what matters to you for your future health care. Having an advance care plan will help you and those around you understand what is important to you, what treatment and care you would like or would prefer not to have, and who can make decisions on your behalf if you’re not able to.

Cheryl has lived with Parkinson’s for more than 11 years and came to the idea of advance care planning when she had an emergency visit to the hospital.

“It made me think about at what point I would want to stop medical intervention. So, I’ve written down my wishes, and my husband Gary and I have shared it with our children, so that they all know my thoughts if they’re confronted with hard decisions.”

She says her family is very accepting of her decisions and reassured that she’s thought about the care she does and doesn’t want if she is ever unable to speak for herself.

A copy of her advance care plan is also lodged with her GP. “It’s very freeing knowing that it’s done. And, of course, it’s easily updated any time.”

For more information go to the Health Quality and Safety Commission at [www.hqsc.govt.nz](http://www.hqsc.govt.nz)

For a full summary of the new rates go to [www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz) and search for ‘benefit rates 2019’.
Choose wisely and review your medicines

The Council of Medical Colleges (CMC) is encouraging people to talk to their doctor about whether they could take fewer medicines.

The CMC coordinates the Choosing Wisely campaign, which encourages patients to ask their health professional whether they really need a test, treatment or procedure.

More isn’t always better when it comes to medical tests, treatments and procedures. Unnecessary interventions are stressful and can lead to more testing to investigate false positives.

In New Zealand, 35 per cent of people aged over 65 are taking five or more long-term medications. Choosing Wisely clinical lead Dr Derek Sherwood says it is important people get their medicines reviewed regularly. “This helps make sure you are receiving the best treatment. When a doctor or pharmacist reviews your medicines they will check things like what medicines you are taking and why, how many different medicines you are taking and any side effects you may be experiencing.”

Dr Sherwood says stopping a medicine can seem daunting, especially if you’ve been taking it for a long time. “However, many older people successfully stop medicines without feeling worse. In fact, you may feel better and improve your quality of life – especially if your symptoms were being caused by your medicines. Talk this over with your GP or specialist.”

Find out more at the Choosing Wisely website at www.choosingwisely.org.nz

Get ready for winter with insulation grants

Many New Zealand homes aren’t warm enough in winter, increasing the risk of respiratory illness.

Putting on another jersey doesn’t help because you are still breathing in cold air. A warm, dry insulated home is healthier and easier to heat.

If you own and live in your own home, you may be eligible for a Government grant offering two-thirds of the cost of ceiling and underfloor insulation. In some regions contributions by community organisations mean there is minimal or no cost to the homeowner. These Warmer Kiwi Homes grants are run through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA).

You may qualify if:

- your home was built before the year 2008
- you are the homeowner (owner-occupier) and have a Community Services Card or SuperGold combo card, or
- you own and live in a home in an area identified as low-income.

If you see or suspect elder abuse, please, speak out about it.
Winter Energy Payment starts again on 1 May

If you’re getting NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension, you’ll also get the Winter Energy Payment from 1 May to 1 October each year. You don’t have to apply, you’ll get it automatically with your other payments.

Couples and people with dependent children will get $31.82 a week and single people will get $20.46 a week.

Travelling overseas

If you’re heading away from New Zealand over the winter months you can keep getting your Winter Energy Payment for up to 28 days. It’s really important you let MSD know if you’ll be away for more than 28 days, otherwise they might pay you too much and have to ask for the money back. The easiest way to let MSD know is using the form on their website www.msd.govt.nz/overseastravel - or give them a call. Don’t forget to get in touch when you return from your travels so your payment can be started again.

Payments to couples

If you’re a couple getting NZ Super or Veteran’s Pension, the Winter Energy Payment will all be paid to one person at the full couple rate. Unfortunately MSD can’t split the payment between you. If you’d like the payment switched to the other person’s account just give them a call.

Opting out or back in

If you don’t want the Winter Energy Payment you can choose to opt out using the form on www.workandincome.govt.nz/winterenergypayment You can get it again by asking MSD to restart it.

More information:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/winterenergypayment
- Seniors line - 0800 552 002, Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm
- Overseas travel - www.msd.govt.nz/overseastravel

Minestrone Soup

Summer salads are out and hearty soups are back in. Try this delicious Minestrone Soup recipe from the NZ Nutrition Foundation. Serves 2-3.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 small onion (diced)
- 1x 425g can tomatoes (chopped/diced)
- 1 ½ teaspoons vegetable stock powder
- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 1/3 cup dried pasta
- ½ cup mixed frozen vegetables
- 1x 400g can mixed beans or red kidney beans (drained)
- Salt and pepper to taste.
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 2 tablespoons parmesan or tasty cheese
- Small handful of fresh herbs to garnish.

Method

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan. Add onion and garlic and cook for 2-3 minutes or until soft.
2. Add tinned tomatoes, vegetable stock powder, water and dried herbs. Bring to boil.
3. Stir in pasta and cook for 10-15 minutes or until pasta is cooked.
4. Add frozen vegetables and tinned beans. Cook for another 3 minutes or until they are heated through. Add lemon juice. Adjust seasonings to taste.
5. Sprinkle with grated cheese and finely chopped fresh herbs.
Late last year the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) released a report about medication errors, based on complaints data.

Medication is the most common healthcare intervention and most of the time the care provided in regard to medicine is very good. However, medication errors do have the potential to cause significant harm and it is vital to learn from the information we have.

The report highlighted common issues for doctors, pharmacists and other health professionals to be aware of when prescribing, dispensing or administering medicine but it also served as a timely reminder of the steps we as individuals can take to reduce harm.

Human error happens but the more information you have about your medication, the better position you’ll be in to act as your own safety net.

Take the time to talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about your prescription and ask questions. Know the name of your medicine; write it down if you need to.

Find out what the medicine is used for, when, and how often you should take it. Ask if there are any side effects you can expect.

Alert them to any potential issues, such as allergies or reactions you’ve had to other medicines in the past.

Keep track of any changes to your medications, especially when you see your doctor or if you’ve been discharged from hospital.

Check whether you need any tests or monitoring while you’re taking a medicine.

**Help shape future NZSL video interpreting and relay services**

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment along with the Office for Disability Issues want to know what you think about six proposed changes that will modernise the New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) video interpreting and relay services.

Video interpreting and relay services help Deaf, deafblind, hearing-impaired, and speech-impaired New Zealanders to communicate with hearing people over the phone.

Individual relay services include: mobile text relay, internet relay, CapTel (captioned telephones), and services that use teletypewriters (TTYs).

For more information about the proposed changes and how to have your say, please visit www.mbie.govt.nz/relayconsultation
Community Connects

You only have a few more days to get your application in for the next round of the Community Connects grants.

The Community Connects grants help fund projects that promote the inclusion and contribution of older people in community life, and support their community to prepare for an ageing population.

The fund makes one-off grants up to $15,000 as part of an annual budget of $100,000.

The current round is open with applications closing on April 7.

For more information including guidelines and the application form, go to www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz

SuperGold Card special offers

Check out the latest special offers for our super seniors through the SuperSeniors website.

![SuperGold Card special offers image]

![Community Connects information image]

![Retail event information image]
Save up to $20 a month

T&Cs apply

SuperGold

Disclaimer: The SuperGold Card programme enables independent businesses to offer discounts and benefits to older New Zealanders. The Ministry of Social Development is not associated with any seller and does not guarantee any representation made by a seller and any future dispute will need to be taken up with the seller not the Ministry of Social Development. Offers range in size and nature and cardholders should always check to see if a better offer is available locally.

Tell us what you think

We want to keep enhancing the value of the SuperGold Card. We’d welcome your ideas on how we can do that and what discounts you’d find useful.

Please email your suggestions to: information@supergold.govt.nz

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Tell us what you think

We want to keep enhancing the value of the SuperGold Card. We’d welcome your ideas on how we can do that and what discounts you’d find useful.

Please email your suggestions to: information@supergold.govt.nz