

The need for a comprehensive Older Persons Strategy, particularly Aged Care

SuperBlues are calling on our Party to assemble in time for the next election a detailed strategy for older people that will place us at the forefront of policy direction in this crucial area of high importance to our members.

For instance, aged care is at a crossroads and without early co-ordinated action the growing demands of our aging population will overwhelm the system.

The Aged Care Association (ACA) statistics show that within 15 years there will be:

- A 44 percent increase in the +65 population of 868,700
- A doubling of the 85+ population of 96,100.

These figures point to a situation that within 18 years nine out of ten hospital beds will be occupied by someone over sixty-five. It takes on average five years to build a new 32-bed aged care facility.

Statistics show that current average wait times for rest home level care is 137 days, or 4.5 months. The figure for hospital level care is 125 days, or about 4 months. Wait time for dementia level care is 169 days or about 6 months and for psycho-geriatric care 176 days.

Future projections include 100,000 cases of dementia by 2030, including a rise in drug and alcohol induced dementia (these manifest as violent behaviour needing psychogeriatric care). Dementia New

Zealand predicts that one in four New Zealanders will die with the disease which will become the second leading cause of death.

Other statistics compiled by ACA show that within the next nine years 55 percent of all people living alone will be 65+. And within the next 24 years 24 percent or 660,00 of the country's seniors will be renters, a factor likely to impact their ability to access care under the current model. They will not be able to afford it, or be able to receive home modifications to assist them.

The ACA says 89 percent of aged care facilities are more than 20 years old and 28 percent more than 50 years old. These include those owned by faith-based and other charitable organisations as well as privately owned smaller facilities. Significant investment is needed to meet current and future demands.

Chair Colleen Singleton is confident a National-led government will produce answers that fit the need. Recognition of the issues was reflected at the Party's August conference policy discussions on "Aging Well" and "Housing".

While no clear solution has presented itself, a variety of ideas are coming forward. Assessment language needs to be representative of a person's situation. Older people could be seen as in active retirement, health oversight, and nursing care.

SuperBlues at the forefront of early Election '26 activities

SuperBlues are in the vanguard of party efforts to ensure National members are well organised and prepared for next year's election in the fresh constituencies created under boundary revisions. Deputy-Chair James Austin's team of TT's (telephone telephonists) operating from National House in Wellington are currently phoning around new electorates in the capital and extending their reach to other new constituencies. We acknowledge the work done by telephone teams in the electorates.

The messages are simple: Be aware, organise memberships and work to ensure there are adequate funds available to carry through a strong election campaign on the ground next year.

Ten North Island general electorates have new or amended names. In Auckland: New Lynn and parts of Kelston become Waitakere; parts of Te Atatu, Upper Harbour, and Kaipara ki Mahurangi become Henderson; Parts of Kelston and Te Atatu become Glendene; and areas of Panmure-Otahuhu and Botany become Otahuhu.

Further south: parts of Bay of Plenty and Tauranga become Mt Maunganui; East Coast becomes East Cape; parts of Otaki and Mana become Kapiti; areas of Mana and Ohariu become Kenepuru; Wellington Central becomes Wellington North; and Rongotai including Brooklyn becomes Wellington Bays. There are no new electorates in the South Island or among the Māori electorates, but there are boundary changes in Christchurch, Invercargill, and Southland.

MPs are aware of the help available to electorates from the TT team. Its willingness to phone up supporters and voters in by-elections has been an essential component of many previous campaigns. James reflects on the enthusiasm of the team: "We have fun. There are plenty of laughs. The tea and scones on breaks are great. We are lucky to have such an enthusiastic and talented group."



Wellington Metro SuperBlues Telephone Team at National House: From left - James Austin, Digby Paape, Joyce Gibson and membership officer Alex Moffat. The team is currently working every Friday from 10am to 3pm contacting supporters across local electorates.

Milestone reached – Greater Christchurch Metro SuperBlues

The launch of Greater Christchurch SuperBlues on 1st August represented a milestone in the development of SuperBlues established nearly 20 years ago. Greater Christchurch comprises the electorates of Wigram, Ilam, Christchurch East, Christchurch Central, Banks Peninsula, Selwyn and Waimakariri.

We are greatly indebted to Dr David Bromell, David Abbott and Jock Muir who were assigned the coordination and launch by regional chair Dean Percy. Says Colleen: The formation of this metro group has been an objective of ours for several years. We know that the city throws up wonderful people with zest for matters political. This group will prove a good catalyst for policy formation and attracting new members. The keynote speaker at the launch function was Health Minister Simeon Brown, supported by Mental

Health Minister Matt Doocey, who is also Associate Minister for Rural Health.

Chair Colleen and Deputy-Chair James Austin were among the 130 people who attended the launch that brought on a range of questions for the speakers – varying through primary health care, progress on Dunedin Hospital and aged care. There were also questions related to the potential “over medicalisation” of mental health.

The organising team see the programme and organisation as “works in progress”. The second meeting was held on Friday, 5 September with guest speaker the Minister for the South Island, Hon James Meager. They aim for future meetings that are “interactive and fun, with speakers that stimulate interest.”



The milestone first meeting of Christchurch Metro SuperBlues attracted an encouraging number of supporters to confirm the aim of turning the city “Blue”!

Turning Christchurch Blue

The new SuperBlues Greater Christchurch group has a sharp focus: turning Christchurch blue. The group complements the region’s Campaign Club work that involves the Christchurch and environs electorate’s “friend” raising and leaflet dropping on one Sunday a month at rotating electorates.