



GROWING TENSIONS - BETWEEN YOUNGER AND OLDER?

Some thoughts from Gordon Hudson, Like Minds Taranaki.

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Inter – Generational Gap(s):

With an increasingly ageing population, will come an increasing range in years between generations.

With this dynamic – there is potential for age-related ‘Inter-generational’ tensions to increase.

We know that NZ’s future population will have:

- *a rising proportion of older people,*
- *a falling share of people in the prime working years,*
- *and relatively fewer children.*

e.g: In the year 2050:

- The number of people over the age of 65 years is projected to grow 2 ½ times
- While those in the 85 years and over will grow 5 times – to over a 250 000 people.

We also know that:

Population ageing is likely to cause a slowdown in economic growth because of the shift to a relatively smaller working age population – leading to decreasing government tax takes and spending ability.

Already 25% of Government spending is on the 12% of the population aged 65 years and over.

And this is expected to increase significantly as the first ‘baby-boomers’ begin receiving super from 2011!

The number of super-annuitants will peak in the late 2020s.

And – we are all keeping fitter, living longer and demanding more and more from an ever to be shrinking government income.

As older people, and as people interested in, and charged with the task of promoting positive ageing, we must take care to appreciate some of the socio-economic dynamics and implications of how positive ageing is achieved.

Because there is nothing surer...

When the going gets tough – the toughest and brightest get going – **overseas** – to higher paid jobs – and supporting another country’s older population.

Already, NZ has lost too many people in the 20 – 40 age grouping and increasing numbers of those who have left are choosing to stay overseas. Among many of the working age left will be an increasing proportion of people less economically active - the immobile, under-educated, or under-employed. Not all older people have been able to save sufficiently to

cover their own accommodation, health and living expenses and will not be as able to depend on this grouping to finance their increasing needs.

Clearly, the next generation will have increasing difficulty – make that impossibility – of coping with the tax burden, the debt burden and the lack of energy burden.

As members of Positive Ageing – we need to be discussing these issues before it is too late – before they become a major problem.

We cannot bury our heads in the sand.

When I am older, I do not want to be the target of denigration by younger people.

I do not want to be seen by them as a taker rather than a contributor.

I do not want to be seen as selfish, demanding and a burden.

But - I fear - I may be seen - as just that.

Political Clout:

Increasing for elderly with increasing numbers of educated and active and vocal participants – “Grey Power” will increase in influence, potentially benefiting the elderly at the expense of fewer and fewer younger people

Decreasing clout for younger people may result in them feeling increasingly powerless to the increasing power of older people, yet remain the main tax contributors.

Younger people have not yet realised their political clout. Wait till they do!

Wealth:

Increasing comparatively/seemingly well off fitter older people receiving super, and a lion’s share of the health and welfare system.

Decreasing numbers of younger taxpayers – sometimes struggling to meet higher taxes – much to pay for the financial support of the elderly.

When people feel as if they have, and probably do have, less to go around, they start to look over their shoulders to check out who is getting more – and how much more.

Healthcare:

Increasing numbers of elderly demanding increasingly expensive and scarce health resources – particularly for people aged 80 years and over .

Younger people and their families at risk of not having ready access to healthcare services due to the health needs of an ageing population

Care of the Elderly – Residential Care and Support Services in the Community:

An increasing ageing population will require a significant increase in support workers – when already, today – there are insufficient people seeking employment or even willing to consider employment in this challenging area.

Our younger population will be increasingly be ethically and economically challenged to provide even reasonable care for an increasing number of elderly.

This is a major problem today and will exacerbate in the near future.

Properties:

While an increasing number of elderly will seek economical, more manageable accommodation, the market prices for their current larger properties may diminish, making them more difficult to sell.

Younger people, many with families, may be competing for reasonably priced accommodation, unless the housing market responds to meet the needs of those aged 75 years and over.

The housing market has a habit of adjusting to changing trends – but not always to the advantage of property owners.

Transport:

Increasing number of elderly people on roads and footpaths – moving more slowly – frustrating younger people who are trying to get places in the shortest time available.

Decreasing younger on roads – moving faster and growing increasingly frustrated by older, slower drivers.

Recreational:

Older people will increasingly populate educational/recreational/sporting/social activities and facilities – demanding and receiving more and more of the different funder's funding.

Younger people and families will need to learn to adjust to the changing focus on provision of more facilities for older people.

Retail:

Our shopping centres will experience significant growth in elderly shoppers with possibly less mobility and requiring more time, wider aisles, lower shelving – all resulting in higher prices.

Younger shoppers are likely to grow increasingly frustrated at coping with more elderly shoppers.

Employment:

An increasing number of older people will compete with younger people for employment opportunities which may, in any event, be a necessary and positive outcome.

There may be too few young people with skills and experience to maintain the economy and infra-structure.

Retirement:

We need to be increasingly open to the potential need to adjust the retirement age upwards. Australia is currently considering a retirement age of 73 years.

There are many occupations where older people can thrive in – and contribute to their own and the community's economic future.

Information Technology:

An increasing gap in the ability of the aged to adapt to the never-ending increasing array of information technology available – leading to the creation of two worlds: the technology literate and the technology illiterate.

Younger people, even the under-educated, seem to have the ability to thrive on technological advances. Communication between them will continue to differ from that between older people.

Racial tensions:

NZ will need an increasing number of immigrants to meet the challenges of a decreasing work age population and to provide support and care for our ageing population.

Of course, there is always a chance, that younger people will be, or become, more aware, tolerant and generous towards the increasing number of elderly – we just have to note the growth of awareness and appreciation that pours forth on ANZAC DAY.

But, I wouldn't count on this for the other 360 or so days.

Positive Ageing:

Like Minds Taranaki is keenly interested in strengthening the mental health of all people in Taranaki. Being aware of and countering stigma and discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs is very important to us.

“Our understanding of – and attitude to our older age, and the attitudes of those around us, can affect our ability to prepare and adjust to the ageing process.

Negative stereotypes and stigma associated with ageing can impact upon our self-esteem, self-image, our social inter-actions and our overall mental health.

Changing attitudes about ageing and older people are important first steps to promoting positive and productive ageing.”

Quote from: www.ageconcern.org.nz

The future offers all older people more opportunities to actively contribute to our society and to become the glue that keeps the social fabric of society together and to play a responsible role in ensuring the future viability of our society is fairer to everyone.

Just a few thoughts about positive ageing – plenty of positives –
but probably - a few tensions there as well.

Gordon Hudson, Manager, Like Minds Taranaki, 19th April 2010.