



Insight

August/September 2025 Grey Power Hutt City Assn

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Upcoming Meetings:

10am Senior Citizens' Rooms, Ground Floor, Forsyth Barr Tower (was named Westfield Towers) 45 Knights Rd, Lower Hutt.

August: The Hon. Chris Bishop, Minister of Housing, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister Responsible for RMA Reform, Minister of Transport, Leader of the House

September: Local Body Elections: Meet the Candidates

Committee:

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President's piece

Well, after a very soggy beginning (we had over 80mm of rain over two days) July has turned out to be a bit of a mixed bag. For once, we have had a lot of windless days, with days varying from moody grey to absolute crackers of clear frosty mornings.

Sandie has been getting on with her tree planting while I've been surveying the line of a new path to try and keep access to our paddocks open as knees become increasingly



creaky and controlling a loaded wheelbarrow on a 30° slope starts to lose its appeal. Despite the cold, the message of lengthening days has definitely got through. Tuis in particular, have started staking out territory and beating up any kereru that comes near 'their' tree. Bell birds have also settled in despite the Tuis' best efforts. They are particularly fond of our banksia and can be found there most mornings topping up on nectar.



Our spring flowers are doing well and so, but completely out of season, is the manuka. The chooks have all gone off lay and are starting to moult, and our ewes are developing visible udders. All in all it seems that our little corner of the world has decided spring is here regardless of what us humans think.

Turning to politics it seems it's open season on super annuitants once again. Politicians of all stripes are never slow in identifying some group other than their core constituents that are the root of all our problems. Now it's the Prime Minister, Mr Luxon, that wants to raise the minimum age of eligibility for NZS to 'cut costs', but if you look a little closer, apart from a few Treasury pointy heads, his claim of unsustainability is largely confined to right wing talk back hosts aka 'commentators' whose expertise is in creating controversy rather than socio economics. There are even those who are advocating for a return to a 'surcharge tax' on other income for those drawing NZS.

The good news is that people who recognise the reality and say so, like the Retirement Commissioner, Jane Wrightson, are finally starting to get some attention. Nor is this a matter where, outside politics, 'Left' and 'Right' views diverge. A report by the New Zealand Initiative, hardly a bastion of socialism, notes that: "*NZ Super does not distort incentives for employment and savings as much as means-tested systems, and it has lower administrative costs. Despite claims to the contrary, NZ Super is also relatively cheap*".

To borrow a favourite chant of current Ministers "Lets get back to basics". How the Government of the day spends money, and how much money they have to spend is a matter of choice. They control not only expenditure, but income and borrowing. So if you hear a politician claiming something is 'unaffordable', it simply means they want to spend the money on something else. Nor is there a simple binary choice

between NZ Super and other socially desirable expenditure like Child support as some commentators seem to think. We can afford both; and attempts to create an artificial generational divide benefits no-one but those who wish to keep the money where it belongs – in their pockets.

Kia Kaha

Pete Matcham

Morning tea with free tea or coffee

We are holding another morning tea on Tuesday, 12 August at 10.00 am at the Glasshouse Café, California Garden Centre, 316 Waiwhetu Rd, Fairfield. Grey Power will pay for your drink, and you buy your own food. Our last morning tea at the Glasshouse Café was a very enjoyable event so please join us on Tuesday, 12 August. All welcome.

Salve et Vale – a new director for the Office for Seniors

Along with a lot of other people who work in areas that support, or advocate on



behalf of older people, I was invited by the Minister for Seniors, Casey Costello, to a reception to farewell Diane Turner MNZM as she steps down from her role as Director of the Office for Seniors.

I have had the honour and pleasure of working with Diane for many years, especially in the area of Age Friendly Cities, and the difference she has made to the way in which the needs and visibility of older people is perceived politically and at a policy level cannot be overestimated. I'm sure that we will be seeing Diane again in some role once she has had

a chance to wind down and spend some time with her family. Any worries I had over the loss of such a powerful advocate for older people was immediately put to rest when the Minister announced that Nicky McDonald had been appointed to the role. Again, I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Nicky as a fellow member of the Age Friendly Aotearoa Expert Advisory Board, where Nicky's policy

work and practical application of AFC principles to the City of Nelson was an exemplar which we sought to replicate elsewhere. Nicky is a Winston Churchill Fellow, having studied ageing demographics and most recently has been successfully trialling an AI initiative supporting older residents for Nelson City Council. I'm confident that the torch has been passed to a worthy successor and that the Office for Seniors will continue to be a powerful and effective advocate on our behalf.



Guest speaker at our July meeting

We were delighted to welcome Tracey Martin as our guest speaker for July. Tracey has long been an active voice in support of older people, as an MP, as New Zealand First Deputy leader and as Minister for Seniors from 2017 – 2020, and now in her current role as CEO of the Aged Care Association. The Aged Care Association represents the wide variety of organisations that, as its name suggests, deliver care to older New Zealanders.



Tracey was at pains to point out that the Aged Care sector does not include 'Retirement Villages' which are a lifestyle choice, but the organisations that support the increasing number of older people who can no longer look after themselves. The ACA represents almost 100 percent of the aged care sector which works out at over 670 facilities with approximately 40,000 residents. At the same time more than 80,000 people are receiving home and community support services in their own homes.

Tracey painted a bleak picture of the future, noting that within 15 years the 65+ population is projected to increase by 44%, that within the next nine years 55 % of all people living alone will be over the age of 65. Additionally, by 2030 there will be an estimated 100,000 people living with dementia.

The demographics of home ownership are also changing. Within the next 24 years 40% of our seniors will be renters. This will affect their ability to access aged care under the current model because they will not be able to afford it, nor will they be able to receive home modification to assist them.

Access to residential care is also very dependent on where you live, even if you are assessed as a priority for safety and personal care reasons.

Tracey pointed out that the current New Zealand price setting process for residential care is not evidence-based and has no relationship to actual costs. Any increase to core pricing by the Government is delivered on a “take it or leave it” basis.

Tracey said the ACA would like to see a New Zealand version of the Australian Independent Aged Care and Hospital Pricing Authority (IHACPA) to ensure fair and transparent pricing. The funding model she advocates splits funding into three categories: Clinical care, Accommodation and Living expense. “Rest home” and “Hospital” categories would be amalgamated with a larger number of pricing bands based on the different levels of needs.

Tracey summed up by saying that the aged care sector is at a crossroads, and that without immediate and co-ordinated action, the growing demands of our aging population will overwhelm the system. However, by adopting these core solutions, we can build sustainable and equitable aged residential care future for all New Zealanders. She concluded with a ‘Call to action’, noting the important role of local Grey Power Associations in generating awareness of the problem by contacting MPs directly, and encouraging individual members to do so.

Chris Bishop, our next speaker says house prices should be around three times the average wage – is he right?

The idea that you can base an economy on the sale of second-hand goods (houses) was ridiculed many years ago by leading economist Steve Keen in his book *Economics debunked*. More recently Bernard Hickey routinely derided our local economy as a Housing market with bits tacked on. For the last twenty odd years our house price inflation has been the most extreme in the developed world yet if you believe most economic commentators, it is vital that the housing market ‘recovers’.

“If house prices are not rising, the majority of local economic commentators do not think the economy is performing. These are jaundiced and ill-informed attitudes that do not serve the public well.” Roger J Kerr

It wasn’t always like this, so how did we end up with the idea that houses are a tradeable commodity, rather than homes?

Whilst real estate agents claim that there is an 'oversupply' of housing, the reality is that we have failed to meet demand for decades. Principal causes have been the use of the RMA by NIMBYs and other vested interests to prevent urban



redevelopment and intensification; the neo-liberal Public Finance and State Sector Acts which have led to the virtual extinction of council housing; the failure to maintain infrastructure, let alone build it in anticipation of growth; and the failure to introduce either a capital gains or wealth tax, which would fund both and create

a disincentive to speculate on houses.

The much-maligned Kiwibuild, had the right idea. Flooding the market with state rental property would have addressed homelessness and killed off the private rental market. It's total failure in execution can be laid at the door of NIMBYs' use of the RMA; and the previously mentioned Acts, both designed to hobble any state intervention in the sacred 'Market'. Not to mention a complete failure of nerve by the Labour Government in the face of concerted public opposition to the idea that house prices should or could fall.

I've previously applauded Chris Bishop for his declared intention of reducing the cost of housing to around three times the average salary. Chris has also made a start with his direction to councils to open up land for housing, and to remove many of the constraints in the RMA used by NIMBYs. On the flip side, his cancelling of Kianga Ora building contracts and plans to sell off 'high value' land in Auckland rather than redevelop it sends entirely the wrong signals and seems to be more in keeping with the idea of reducing Government spending.

It will be interesting to see how he balances his own goal as Minister for Housing, with those of his colleagues who want house prices to rise because they believe it will stimulate the economy. Come along to our next meeting and hear what his answers are.

Keeping warm and healthy this winter (cont/d from last newsletter)

TEN easy ways to save money and cut your electricity costs talk to your electricity company about which plan is best for you. Most companies provide options including direct debits at a flat rate all year round, pre-payment meters and low use rates for people who are very frugal.

1. Most of your electricity bill will go on hot water so use less if you can. Set your washing machine on a cold wash and rinse your dishes in cold water. Take short showers instead of baths. Showers use 60 per cent less water than baths.
2. Fix dripping taps. A dripping hot tap can cost \$80 a year but a washer to fix it costs less than \$1!
3. If your hot water cylinder is old, keep the heat in by using a hot water cylinder wrap. These are available from hardware stores. Make sure the thermostat is set to produce a temperature of 55C at the tap (this will also prevent scalds).
4. Always turn the lights off in rooms when you leave them. But if you are using energy efficient light bulbs it is better to leave them on if you are returning within ten minutes.
5. Appliances that have a standby function (such as TVs, stereos, mobile chargers, computers or microwaves) should be turned off at the wall. This can save you up to \$75 a year.
6. Clothes dryers can be very expensive to run so try not to use them unless you really have to. Heated towel rails are also expensive and cost around \$120 a year to run.
7. Make sure there is generous air space behind the back of your fridge and try to locate it out of direct sunlight, or in a cooler room like the laundry. Don't open the fridge door too often or leave it open.
8. Make sure you cool food before putting it in the fridge. Turn off your second or 'drinks' fridge - this could be costing you \$190 per year.
9. When cooking keep the oven door closed. Always keep lids on pots and use as little water as possible to cook foods. Simmer rather than boil food and if possible use a microwave, as this uses 30-40 per cent less power than a conventional oven. Defrost food naturally, if possible, (in the fridge is best)



rather than in the microwave.

Insulate your home - subsidies for landlords and homeowners

Insulation is the best way to keep your house warm and save on heating costs. The government has subsidies available in many parts of the country to help landlords

and homeowners save hundreds of dollars on ceiling and floor insulation, draught stopping and hot water cylinder wraps.

The Energy Efficiency Conservation Authority offers EnergyWise Home Grants which are targeted at people with low incomes and cover all houses built before 2000. Ask your landlord whether they know about this scheme.

To find out whether this scheme operates in your area, phone 0800 358 676 or visit [Energywise](#) funding for insulation.

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or 027 230 3732

Any electricity concerns

If you have any concerns about electricity, please contact contact Graham Peters, Chair of the Energy Portfolio at energy@greypower.co.nz

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We have other locations in: Upper Hutt, Wellington and Kāpiti



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