
SUBMISSION TO DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL 9 YEAR PLAN APRIL 2025

About Abbeyfield

Abbeyfield's supported housing model offers a proven alternative for independent living for older people, especially the growing numbers unable to afford other options. An Abbeyfield House provides affordable accommodation for a group of 9-14 people over 65, living within a family-style, purpose-built dwelling, supported by a housekeeper/cook and a voluntary management committee. Abbeyfield living provides security, companionship, and support to maintain wellbeing.

Features include:

- Comfortable private studio with ensuite for each resident
- Shared areas and facilities including dining room, lounge, laundry and gardens
- Housekeeper/cook employed to plan, provision and prepare meals, keep common areas clean and tidy, provide general support for residents and help maintain harmony. Residents eat lunch and dinner together in the dining room
- Rent is affordable for a superannuitant with no other income
- Once a house is established it is self-sustaining. Abbeyfield Dunedin receives no central or local government funding or subsidies

Abbeyfield does not provide nursing care, and residents can access external support if needed for personal care on the same basis as other people living in the community.

There are fifteen Abbeyfield houses around New Zealand. Abbeyfield houses are managed by local incorporated societies and supported the Abbeyfield New Zealand office. Sound management and fiscal practices are in place at each level to ensure ongoing provision for the wellbeing of residents.

Abbeyfield Dunedin, at 210 Balmacewen Rd, Wakari has been operating since 2007. Abbeyfield Dunedin is a registered not for profit charity. Abbeyfield New Zealand is a registered community housing provider.

Housing for older people is our area of experience and expertise. That's what this submission is about.

Our submission

Our submission concerns this part of the plan:

Community housing update

Our priority for the 936 community housing units the DCC owns is to look after the ones we have the best we can. We intend to continue our upgrade programme, modifying the units so they are drier and warmer with lower running and maintenance costs. We will also finish the housing redevelopment project we have underway, i.e., the four new units at our Fitzroy Street property. In the 10 year plan 2021-2031 had \$20 million in the capital budget for building new community housing units. The new capital programme has now been paused meaning there is no money allocated to new community housing in the 9 year plan.

DCC has a long history of providing community housing in Dunedin. We commend successive councils for this, and for committing to the upgrades of existing housing.

(1) Restore capital funding for expansion of community housing to the 9 Year Plan budget

The Council's Social Wellbeing Strategy 2013-23 identified key challenges for the city:

- Aging population
- Low income levels
- Housing stock.

These are more relevant than ever, and point to an increasing need for more healthy, affordable accommodation for elderly people.

The Council's website cites figures showing that the proportion of people over 65 in the Dunedin population is expected to increase from 18% in 2023 to 24% in 2043. In absolute numbers this is 24,235 (2023) to 33,964 (2043).

(<https://www.dunedin.govt.nz/council/annual-and-long-term-plans/10-year-plan-2021-2031/section-2/snapshot-of-a-great-small-city>)

A 2021 New Zealand report stated

Comparisons between the groups of those aged 75+ and 65-74 years show that problem housing is more prevalent in the younger group. At present, older people in Aotearoa may be generally well off but as younger cohorts reach older age, housing and neighbourhood problems may increase. The simple fact that home ownership is rapidly decreasing among younger generations points to problems with the wellbeing of many more older people in the future. Because of the clear pattern of relationships shown between wellbeing and housing in older age, more planning must be put into the provision of appropriate quality housing and neighbourhoods for an ageing population.

(Stephens, C., Birchall, M., & Thompson, J. (2021). *Diversity in housing experiences and their correlates for New Zealand adults aged 75+ and 65-74 years. Report for the Commission for Financial Capability, New Zealand.* <https://apo.org.au/node/316339>)

Records from Abbeyfield New Zealand bear this out. They show a large decline in homeownership amongst people moving into Abbeyfield houses over time.

Two years to	Percentage of Abbeyfield residents who owned their own home before moving to Abbeyfield
October 2015	50%
October 2017	43%
October 2023	13%

People who do not have the asset of home ownership are much more constrained in the choices, and are very unlikely, for example, to have the resources to buy into a retirement village.

In releasing their report *Housing Insecurity for Older People in Aotearoa* last year, the NZ Council of Christian Social Services noted

By 2028, over 25% of Aotearoa's population will be over 65, yet the housing insecurity challenges faced by this growing cohort remain largely unaddressed. Older people in Aotearoa are struggling with housing insecurity, with significant disparities in access to emergency housing and public housing. Without a clear, comprehensive plan, we are not ready to support this group effectively.
(<https://nzccss.org.nz/press-release/addressing-housing-insecurity-for-older-people-in-aotearoa-a-call-to-action/>)

This leaves an important role for the City Council to provide for its people, now and in future years. A great small city will make sure all its people are adequately housed.

We submit that Council restore capital funding for expansion of community housing to the 9 Year Plan budget.

The budget should give effect to this priority. This could be through investing directly in new housing or working with community housing providers.

(2) Consider models of communal housing in future projects

Nearly all housing projects are about individual households. There is also space for including models of communal living. Abbeyfield shows how this can operate successfully.

There are two significant advantages in a communal model like Abbeyfield.

Health

Regular social contact is one of the most important determinants of continued good health in old age. New Zealand research indicates that the strongest predictive indicator for an older person moving to aged residential care is living alone. In other words, living with other people keeps elderly people independent for longer.

Looking specifically at "social factors" that led to care home admission, Jamieson's team found four things spiked the chances of entry dramatically: loneliness; living alone; carer distress; and lack of positive social interactions.

Ongoing good nutrition is also hard to sustain for elderly people living alone.

New research [2021] from Massey University highlights more than a third (37 per cent) of older people who live in the community are at risk of malnutrition. Those at risk were likely to experience more social and emotional loneliness and have fewer social supports than those not at nutritional risk.

(<https://www.massey.ac.nz/about/news/older-people-living-alone-at-high-risk-of-malnutrition/#:~:text=New%20research%20from%20Massey%20University,those%20not%20at%20nutritional%20risk.>)

The Abbeyfield model brings people together so social interaction is built into their day. The provision of nutritious meals brings significant health benefits. Our data shows that the average age for Abbeyfield residents moving to aged residential care is 3-4 years older than the general population.

Cost

A new Abbeyfield style house for 12-14 residents will cost a fraction of the amount of that many individual units. Moreover, a single new Abbeyfield house will free up that number of other houses in the community, as nearly all Abbeyfield residents have been living by themselves before moving to Abbeyfield.

We submit that Council consider models of communal housing in future projects. Abbeyfield Dunedin will be happy to offer advice to Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the 9 Year Plan.
We would like to speak to councillors at a hearing too.

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