

## **TERTIARY EDUCATION STRATEGY 2014-2019**

### **Submission by SeniorNet Wellington**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of education for all ages is paramount. Tertiary education provides an opportunity for people to embrace and extend their learning to improve their lives, contribute to economic growth and partake in a meaningful role in society

#### **THE STRATEGY DOCUMENT**

The Strategy Document<sup>1</sup> states that "meeting the needs of a growing economy, and new technologies will require the future tertiary education system to be more outward-facing and engaged" It sets out the following four points for a tertiary education system to become more flexible and strategic by:

- ensuring the tertiary education system performs well, not just as its own system but also as part of the wider New Zealand economy
- ensuring the system can adapt more quickly to change
- addressing changing skill needs
- responding to changes in learning styles and learning delivery

#### **PRIORITIES**

Six specific priorities have been listed as:-

- i. Delivering skills for the industry
- ii. Getting at-risk young people into a career
- iii. Boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika
- iv. Improving Adult literacy and numeracy
- v. Strengthening research-based institutions
- vi. Growing international linkages

Such priorities are applauded but SeniorNet Wellington believes more emphasis and balance needs to be given to the learning needs of older people who also contribute to the well-being and growth of the New Zealand economy as well as making a major contribution as volunteer office bearers across a broad spectrum of organised activities for senior citizens in their respective communities. Computer competence has become increasingly necessary to enable such volunteers to carry out these roles effectively and their contributions to society are immeasurable.

#### **A FURTHER PRIORITY NEEDED**

SeniorNet Wellington submits that a further priority should be added that enhances opportunities for older people to develop new or wider skills.

#### **COMMENTS**

The Strategy Document fails to adequately recognise that older people must be given more opportunities to learn if they are to contribute to a stronger and growing economy. The document concentrates on 'qualifications' as a measure but acknowledges that the education system needs to:-

- be more outward-facing and engaged
- have strong links with industry, community and the global economy
- respond to changes in learning styles and learning delivery
- community education is informal reflecting a diverse range of community interests and needs

<sup>1</sup> Page 7 DRAFT Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019

### Proportion of older people in society

Older people comprise a large proportion of the community and this proportion is increasing. The population aged 65+ has doubled since the early 1980s to reach 635,200 equal to 14 per cent of the total population.

New Zealand population trends<sup>2</sup> show:

- The number of people over the age of 65 will double in the next 20 years to around 1.2 million in 2036
- Around 23 per cent of the total population will be aged 65 or over in 20 years compared to 14 per cent now

Older people are projected to contribute \$25.65b in unpaid and voluntary work in 2051, up from \$6.58b in 2011.<sup>3</sup> Much of their voluntary work will require the use of computer programmes and the internet.

Most people can expect to spend at least a third of their life in retirement or semi-retirement. The proportion of the 65+ age group involved in online activities has doubled over the three years to 2012.

**See Appendix A**

### A new fourth age

There is a new “fourth age”<sup>4</sup> for learning. People in the 75+ age group do not feel the need for ‘qualifications’ designed for the labour market but have a strong desire to informally keep learning to maintain identity and social engagement in the community.

The “fourth age” is an integral part of Adult Community Education (ACE) and a vital part of the fabric of our Society. A policy statement<sup>5</sup> issued by ACE Aotearoa highlights the value of adult and community education for lifelong learning. It concludes, inter alia that “learning can happen in any setting, formal, informal, in an institution or in an unstructured manner...”. “Lifelong learning within a community brings strength and resilience to its members.

### Pace of technological change

The pace of change driven by new technologies and technological advances looks set to continue and even accelerate, meaning that existing skills in the most high-value sectors of the workplace will need to be frequently upgraded.<sup>6</sup> People in the workforce may be up-skilled from time to time but:-

- those skills may be confined to the specialised needs of their workplace
- their workplace may provide in-house or external training and technical support
- after retirement, and without workplace support they may need to widen or refresh their knowledge to cope with computer issues, online communication and internet safety and benefit from ever-changing new technological developments.

### Social Networking

The use of computers is becoming more and more important in the area of social networking. Networking is increasingly being done using computer based systems rather than letters and telephones. It is important that older New Zealanders are able to participate in the new forms of networking.

This has been reinforced by research as in the paper ‘Social networks and their effects on health over time’<sup>7</sup> from Stephens, C. & Noone, J. (2011) who state:-

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<sup>2</sup> Older New Zealanders, page 7 “Trends” – Office for Senior Citizens – 2013 [www.msd.govt.nz/oldernewzealanders](http://www.msd.govt.nz/oldernewzealanders)

<sup>3</sup> The Business of Ageing: 2013 update – Ministry of Social Development <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/business-of-ageing/>

<sup>4</sup> Demography and Lifelong Learning – UK Paper 2009 <http://www.readingandspellingchannel.com/uploads/4/0/4/1/4041264/demography-lifelong-learning.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> ACE Aotearoa <http://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/about-us/publications>

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/forces-for-change/forces-for-change-06.asp>

<sup>7</sup> Health, Work and Retirement Survey – Working Paper [http://hwr.massey.ac.nz/resources/Stephens\\_Noone\\_SS\\_Chapter\\_220212.pdf](http://hwr.massey.ac.nz/resources/Stephens_Noone_SS_Chapter_220212.pdf)

*“The data provides support for the model prediction that social network characteristics and social support will have an effect on health. Such understandings have implications for any interventions to develop supportive networks for older people in the community, and for considerations of the kinds of social interaction that might provide social support for those with particular health or disability needs”*

There are therefore important health implications in ensuring that older New Zealanders have access to and are competent in using Internet based social networking. This will involve on-going training and support as online social networking is an area that changes rapidly.

A digital literacy research report<sup>8</sup> commissioned by the NZ Computer Society (now named The Institute of IT Professionals NZ) has, among other things recognised the wealth of knowledge and experience older citizens with technological savvy can provide a valuable contribution to society. **See Appendix B**

#### Access to Government Services

The NZ government is currently moving to having many of its services available online. This will lead to it being much more difficult for people to access services without using the Internet. Already the introduction of the RealMe service from NZPost allows access to many services including passport renewal.

It is therefore important that seniors are confident in accessing these services and it is expected that there will be a need for training when new services are introduced and for refresher courses for the less confident users.

#### Working or volunteering in retirement

There is a continuing need for older people in the workforce, or in retirement to not only learn computer skills but also extend their knowledge and skills with computers and the internet. Computer technology know-how has become an accepted norm for every-day living. Examples are online banking, obtaining information from websites, downloading forms, ‘peace of mind’ with internet safety and now social media and the use of mobile devices.

Many older people currently do not have any experience of using a computer and the internet. Others who during their working life have gained limited experience and after retirement wish to extend their skills as new technology is introduced. Many want to learn at their own level and in an informal and friendly manner.

As the percentage of retirement age New Zealanders increases the number in the workforce will also increase. New Zealand has one of the highest employment rates of older people in the OECD. For example, among 65–69 year olds in 2009, New Zealand’s employment rate of 34 per cent was nearly three times higher than the OECD median of 12 per cent, and considerably higher than the rates in the United Kingdom (18 per cent), and Australia (24 per cent).(data from Min Social Development).

Information on the Ministry of Social Development website<sup>9</sup> also states:-

*“There are a number of barriers to remaining in work or working productively at older ages. New Zealand research shows that both employers and older workers themselves hold a number of stereotypes about older workers. These included the stereotypes that older workers are less able and productive, unable to adapt to new technology, more costly and provide less return on investment in training.”*

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<sup>8</sup> Research and Case Studies of Digital Literacy  
<http://www.iitp.org.nz/files/201001%20Digital%20Literacy%20Research%20Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/seniorcitizens/positive-ageing/trends/economic-contributions.html>

### The role of SeniorNet in teaching older people new technology

SeniorNet Wellington is one of over 90 seniornets in New Zealand that offer a learning environment that teach older people computer skills and allied new technology. Learning is carried out in an enjoyable and friendly way that motivates people to enjoy and use technology in their everyday lives to also enable them to effectively participate in, and offer their wisdom to society. SeniorNet Wellington was established in 1992 (the first in the country) and since that time over 4,200 older adults within Wellington have benefitted from the learning opportunities offered. On average, in recent years over 120 new members join SeniorNet Wellington each year having a mix of learning requirements. All teaching and support is offered by members on a voluntary and caring basis.

Overall older people who have attended learning sessions at SeniorNet facilities have been able to communicate with society (including government and commercial institutions) more effectively and with computer skills provide administrative support to industry, and non-profit community organisations. As the younger generation no longer use email new found skills such as Texting, Facebook and Twitter enable older people to keep in touch with the younger part of their families spread all over the world.

### Ministerial statements

The Minister of Senior Citizens has said in a Forward to the 2013 publication 'Older New Zealanders' "*Older people are key contributors to our economy and our communities. They are our skilled workers, volunteers, caregivers, mentors and leaders. They continue to make a large economic contribution as business leaders, taxpayers and consumers. We need to ensure that there are a range of choices and opportunities to meet the diverse needs of older people.*"<sup>10</sup>

The first paragraph in the Forward to the Strategy by Minister Joyce is pertinent to the whole ambit of Tertiary Education. It states "*Tertiary Education helps people improve their lives and of those around them. It is a passport to success for individuals in our Society, and supports wider economic growth and prosperity as skilled people are essential to the success of businesses and other organisations*" The Forward goes on to say "*the proposed Strategy signals a shift toward a more outward facing New Zealand tertiary education system, with strong links to industry, community and the global economy*"

### Strategy Document lacks balance

The Strategy Document needs to emphasise education for older people to:

- Maintain and advance intellectual independence
- Play a continuing role in re-engaging the elderly within the community
- Continue to develop quality learning opportunities for the elderly
- Contribute to the wellbeing (including economic wellbeing) of older people

### Conclusion

SeniorNet Wellington therefore submits that the Tertiary Education Strategy include a further priority to enhance opportunities for older people to develop new or wider skills not only to enhance their own lives, but to benefit the wider community as well.

### **For SeniorNet Wellington Incorporated**



Colin Archer

Chairman

Email [ColinArcher@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ColinArcher@xtra.co.nz)

Phone (04) 478 6559

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<sup>10</sup> Older New Zealanders publication [www.msd.govt.nz/oldernewzealanders](http://www.msd.govt.nz/oldernewzealanders)

# Appendix A

## From Statistics New Zealand

[http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/snapshots-of-nz/yearbook/society/technology/65plus.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/yearbook/society/technology/65plus.aspx)

### Golden age no stranger to digital age

Images of life at retirement have changed substantially over recent years.

Thanks to improvements in health, wealth, education, and work conditions, our whole population is changing; of all people old enough to work (aged 15 and over), 1 in 6 are now 65 years or over (65+). But we're discovering that those entering this age group are not only living longer, they're also living 'smarter'.

### Living longer and smarter

Just under half the 65+ group were Internet users in 2012. That's around 280,000 people – over 60,000 more than in 2009. This now technologically engaged group sidesteps queues and escapes bad weather through the convenience of doing things online from home.

Of the older Internet users, just under half (139,000) used the Internet for online banking in the past year. This was the activity the greatest number of the 65+ age group participated in (as for other age groups). Almost as many (135,000) used the Internet to find health information.

Access to such services online can offer significant benefit to those with mobility issues.

The ease of shopping from home also appealed to people aged 65+. Around 137,000 of them (49 percent) made online purchases in the last year. If we look more closely at online spending over a four-week period, 31,000 people spent up to \$100 online, and another 24,000 spent up to \$500.

### Internet entertainment

While the practical uses of the Internet were the most-favoured online activities of the older generations, online entertainment has also become popular. Of Internet users aged 65+, just under one-third read digital newspapers or books, 1 in 5 watched movies, and just under 1 in 5 downloaded or listened to music online.

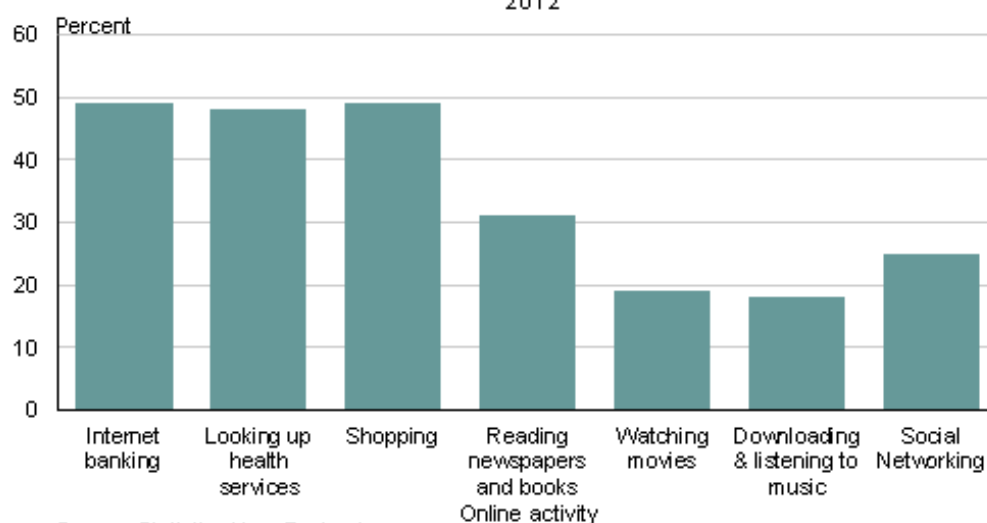
With access to instant communication at our fingertips, distance from family and friends is much less of an issue today; almost 1 in 4 people in the 65+ group used a social networking site in 2012.

### Number online grows

Not only has the proportion of the 65+ age group involved in online activities increased, the group itself continues to grow. This means the actual number of people engaged in some activities has almost doubled over the three years to 2012.

### Internet users aged 65 years and over

By online activities in the last 12 months  
2012



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Source:  
Statistics  
New  
Zealand

# **Appendix B**

## ***Extract from:***

***A Summary of International Reports , Research and Case Studies of Digital Literacy Including implications for New Zealand of adopting a globally-recognised digital literacy standard***

<http://www.iitp.org.nz/files/201001%20Digital%20Literacy%20Research%20Report.pdf>

*Published by the NZ Computer Society 2010 (now known as From the Institute of IT Professionals NZ (Formerly known as the NZ Computer Society)*

### ***Page 32 Section 4.3 Older Citizens***

The EU has recognised the aging populations within the developed Member States. Older citizens fall into two groups, those nearing or in early retirement and those significantly older citizens. Each group will have different needs and are not strictly categorized by age but by other factors. Both groups will vary in terms of the education levels and wish to use ICT. In both groups there is a wealth of knowledge and experience that could provide a valuable contribution to society.

The first group may have reasonably good health and still wish to have active participation in workforce; they may be looking for opportunities to fill leisure time. They are able to attend classes and utilise their skills to for information gathering, participating in community activities and purchasing online services.

The second group may have age-related health issues and may become less mobile. They may be less inclined to learn to use the new technologies because of a lack of confidence and familiarity. However, there is value to this group as ICT provides them access to services from home and may assist with overcoming the isolation associated with being home-bound.

There are a number of advantages both to governments and citizens in developing ICT competence among older citizens. These include:

- Access to online services (shopping, travel and e-government)
- Ability to connect with friends and family who are physically distant
- Ability to participate in online social networks to overcome isolation
- Access to information and e-learning opportunities
- Ability for contribute back to society through community participation and knowledge sharing online,

E-inclusion initiatives for older citizens have found that training needs to be delivered in such a way that it builds the confidence in these groups and provides for on-going support. In the second group, this is often best achieved in the home on a one on one basis.