

12/08/2024

Consultation: Making it easier to build granny flats
Building System performance
Building, Resources and Markets
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
PO Box 1473
Wellington 6140

Submission on Making it easier to build granny flats

Tēnā koutou

Age Concern New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the Consultation: *Making it easier to build granny flats*.

We are pleased to see proposed changes that will help to ease Aotearoa New Zealand's housing shortage and provide more affordable small, detached and self-contained housing on properties with an existing home. 'Granny flats' as they are commonly known, provide a housing option close to family but enabling independent living for ageing parents or teenagers. They may also be useful accommodation for guests or other extended whānau.

Age Concern New Zealand supports making it easier to build granny flats providing the checks and balances in the Building Act and Resource Management Act apply as outlined in the discussion document.

Our comments focus on issues related to older New Zealanders rather than on the specific changes to the legislation. Decisions on the best options outlined in the discussion document are outside our expertise,

We do, however, stress the importance of any regulatory changes protecting the health and wellbeing of occupants. Every effort must be made to ensure that granny flats are healthy, warm, dry, durable, safe and future proofed so that occupants can enjoy and be healthy in their home.

We are making this submission as Age Concern New Zealand's expertise is about older New Zealanders. Age Concern New Zealand is a trusted charity working in local communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand to support older people, their whānau and friends. We aim to ensure older New Zealanders get the best advice and support no matter where they live in Aotearoa. We are vitally interested in the health and well-being of older New Zealanders.

One of our key priorities is housing and urban design. We are vocal advocates for expanding housing options that are affordable, secure, accessible, climate-resistant and healthy.

Housing issues for older New Zealanders are front and centre for us.

All of us experience life changes, for example, our health may deteriorate, or we may lose a partner or our employment. We may lose contact with some of the friends who have been our support network. These changed circumstances have the potential to mean that living independently in our own home away from family and friends is less viable, especially with the rising cost of living.

New Zealand's population is ageing and within ten years it is estimated there will be 1.2million people aged 65 and over. ¹ It is vital that policy makers take this in to account in developing and implementing future housing strategies.

We urgently need to provide a range of housing options for older New Zealanders. We are alarmed at the number of older New Zealanders who are homeless or forced to choose between paying their rent or mortgage or paying for other essentials such as food, heating and healthcare, because of high housing costs. ²

Key Comments:

1. Age Concern New Zealand supports changes to make it easier to build small (up to 60 square metres), self-contained, detached dwellings on properties with an existing home on them.
2. The dwellings must be warm, dry, safe, durable and accessible for those with mobility or other disabilities.
3. We recognise the urgent need to provide an increased number of affordable housing options, however, quality, health and safety for the dwelling and the future occupants must not be compromised to achieve this goal. It would be useful to know, for example, how consistently high quality of the builds will be achieved and monitored.
4. We understand there are various council charges associated with erecting or modifying dwellings. We ask that if the cost of obtaining a building consent is removed, the amount is not built into other charges to retain the current level of council income.
5. We recommend central and local government take into consideration and plan for the further pressure that additional dwellings and intensified housing will place on infrastructure.

¹ <https://officeforseniors.govt.nz/assets/documents/our-work/better-later-life/Better-Later-Life-Strategy/Better-Later-Life-He-Oranga-Kaumatua-2019-to-2034.pdf>

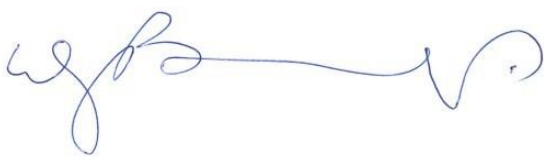
² <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/350333533/struggling-pensioners-choose-between-heat-and-food>

6. We agree and support that the proposed changes will help enable intergenerational living.
7. “Granny flats” will not meet the needs of all older New Zealanders. In some instances for example, it may uproot the older person from the community, friends, social support networks and services they want and need.
8. There is the risk of older homeowners being coerced by family to shift from the main dwelling on the property into the ‘granny flat’. Where this is not a willing decision by the older person it is elder abuse. Alternatively, pressure may be put on an older person to sell their home and share the proceeds with family and live in a granny flat on the adult children or grandchild’s property. Again, if this is not the older person’s decision it amounts to elder abuse.
9. We support exploring, as indicated in the discussion document, how these changes will be implemented on Māori land, papakāinga and kaumātua housing.

Final comment

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission on *Making it easier to build granny flats*, we are very interested to hear the outcome of the consultation process.

Nāku noa, nā,



Karen Billings-Jensen
Chief Executive
Age Concern New Zealand