

Affordable housing for the elderly



The fact that New Zealand has an ageing population is common knowledge.

We are also living longer and are healthier than ever before, which adds to our ageing population.

While it is wonderful to have our elders around longer, we need to address the social issues associated with an ageing population.

As the population grows, affordable accommodation options for elderly are becoming more of a problem. Contributing to the problem is the high cost of private sector rentals, plus the additional costs such as heating, electricity and food.

Buying an apartment in a retirement village also has a high cost, and many simply cannot afford to live in a fully-serviced retirement home.

As a result, many elderly continue to live independently or with family. They need to be assessed to qualify medically for government funding to go into a retirement complex.

Lyndon Carpenter, chairperson of Abbeyfield Waikato Inc, says there are several other contributing factors causing a lack of affordable accommodation options for elderly in Hamilton.

"With the recent sale of council pensioner housing this doesn't guarantee the community will meet the needs of older people in future years, and with the reduction in availability of cheaper private and state rentals for individuals this contributes to the lack of affordable pensioner accommodation in Hamilton," said Lyndon.

Abbeyfield House, situated in Hamilton inside the perimeter of Te Ara Hou Village,



Abbeyfield House residents, left to right, Jack Norton, Gladys Beggs, Sylvia Beautyman, Lesley Martin, Kum Lan Brennan (staff), Betty Raiser, Annie Middleton, John Shephard, Tom Usher.

offers support in rental accommodation at a price that is affordable to most elderly people.

It is a bit like flatting for older people where each resident has their own room and bathroom, but shares facilities such as lounge and kitchen and continues to live an independent life.

Abbeyfield Waikato is a registered charity that is run by a volunteer board of trustees. They employ housekeepers who take care of the shopping, provide two main

meals per day, and manage the day-to-day running of the house with volunteer support.

Abbeyfield house is designed for people aged 55 and over, but is particularly suitable to those receiving national super payments, plus the accommodation supplement available to needy retirees.

Generally the age spread at the house is between 70 and 94. There is no capital charge to move in and a weekly charge covers everything. The house is affordable

and provides all the amenities a home would provide.

Abbeyfield House is suitable for people living alone who are looking for companionship and security, but they are not ready for, or able to afford, a commercial retirement complex. Up to 12 residents can live at Abbeyfield House at one time.

■ To make contact, talk to the residents, or tour the house, visit www.abbeyfield.co.nz