



# Climate change and older New Zealanders

## What the national adaptation plan means for you

## Adapt and thrive: Building a climate-resilient New Zealand

**Our first national adaptation plan will help New Zealanders adapt to the effects of climate change now, and better protect us against changes to come.**

Many impacts are already with us, with unstable and unpredictable weather, worsening floods, droughts and storms, and rising sea levels around coastlines. We can expect more changes will happen. Lowering emissions can reduce the impacts of climate change but won't eliminate them all.

The national adaptation plan sets out what actions the Government will take over the next six years to help all New Zealanders adapt and thrive in a changing climate.

It has actions relevant to every sector and community in New Zealand, and addresses the priority risks that need action now.

Climate change risks and the costs of adapting will need to be shared across society, but through the actions in the plan we can reduce long-term costs across the motu.

### Managing risk now and for the future

In 2020, the National Climate Change Risk Assessment set out the main risks that New Zealanders face from the impacts of climate change.

These include risks to people's health and property, risks to our infrastructure like roads or water supplies, and risks to our natural environments.

This national adaptation plan is the first in a series. It will be updated every six years to respond to changing climate risks.

# Impacts of climate change on older New Zealanders

Everyone is affected by climate change. But some people are more vulnerable to the damaging effects than others, including older people.

During a climate-related emergency such as a flood, they may be reluctant to leave their home or need help to do so safely.

In heatwaves and severe winter storms, older people are more likely than others to suffer health problems or lose their lives. Climate-related emergencies and events can also disrupt the support networks they rely on.

However, older New Zealanders aren't just passively standing on the side lines. Many have a strong commitment to fighting the impacts of climate change for the sake of the planet their children and grandchildren will live in.

## What you've told us

During consultation on the draft adaptation plan, submitters who identified as older New Zealanders or who represent older people suggested:

- an increase in building standards could help reduce the risks older people face from climate change
- government insurance schemes to target low-income groups, including older people, and for central government to assist in relocating communities
- innovation and creativity in solutions
- a greater sense of urgency for action on climate change.

## How actions in the plan will help older New Zealanders adapt to climate change

The plan outlines a programme of work to support and encourage all New Zealanders to adapt. It brings together existing actions and proposed future work.

### Enabling better risk-informed decisions

The actions in the plan provide information, guidance and tools about climate change threats and responses. Older people can use these to understand and assess the risks they face and decide how to adapt. Some of the key actions include:

- Action 3.2 Design and develop risk, resilience and climate adaptation information portals: these will collect and make available data and information on social and equity risks. The portals will also help assess people's vulnerability to climate change, including disproportionately affected groups such as older people.
- Action 3.4 Raise awareness of climate hazards and how to prepare: this will deliver public education campaigns and provide information to help older people get ready for emergencies. This will help ensure people know what to do and have what they need to get through.

## **Adaptation options including managed retreat**

Many communities are already under threat from natural hazards events. Successfully adapting will be vital as climate impacts worsen. Some people and communities may have to alter how and where they live.

One option is managed retreat, which may be necessary to reduce or eliminate exposure to intolerable risk. It's a carefully planned and managed process of relocating assets, activities and sites of cultural significance away from at-risk areas.

The plan will support older New Zealanders to understand the adaptation options available. Key actions include:

- Action 5.7 Reduce and manage the impacts of climate hazards on homes and buildings: this will help building owners to understand and assess their adaptation options. This action includes collating existing information to help adapt now; researching the impacts of climate hazards on different typologies; producing property-level guidance; developing an assessment framework; and investigating incentives. This action is also necessary to inform further work such as regulatory changes.
- Action 5.13 Connect communities to wider response and recovery support: this will continue work with central and local government and communities to support effective, joined-up disaster response and recovery efforts.

## **Embedding climate resilience across government**

The Government will embed climate resilience across all its strategies and policies. The following chapters have actions relevant to older New Zealanders.

**The communities chapter** sets out how we'll support all communities around New Zealand, including older people, to adapt to climate change now and in the future. For example:

- Action 9.2 Develop a Health National Adaptation Plan: this will prepare the health sector to meet the needs of communities affected by climate change. Key steps include identifying and considering the needs of groups who are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

**The infrastructure chapter** covers sectors like transport and energy. It sets out what we need to do to ensure our physical infrastructure, like roads and water supply, can withstand the impact of climate change. This includes:

- Action 3.8 Develop guidance for assessing risk and impact on physical assets and the services they provide: this will ensure the needs of older people (and other groups who may be disproportionately affected by climate events) are considered by infrastructure owners.

### **Future engagement during implementation**

As the plan is implemented, more targeted engagement with different stakeholders, including older people, will take place.

Inclusive engagement, particularly with those disproportionately affected by climate change, will help ensure actions lead to equitable climate resilience.

We are taking the same approach with the implementation of the emissions reduction plan and encouraging engaged and active public participation.

## **Find out more**

Read [Aotearoa New Zealand's first national adaptation plan](#)

