



Pacific Perspectives on Ageing in New Zealand

Pacific-Focused Qualitative Research
Prepared for the New Zealand Longitudinal Study of
Ageing (NZLSA)

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Abstract

Objectives: The primary objective of the research was to investigate Pacific perspectives on ageing to identify specific cultural values and understandings that will become increasingly important as New Zealand's Pacific populations age. The aim was to identify the perceptions of Pacific Elders about the range of issues known to affect older people and their enjoyment and participation in community and family life, and to enquire from them what they considered to be most important areas that would enhance their wellbeing as Elders.

Method: Five Pacific culturally specific groups of Tokelauan, Niuean, Tongan, Cook Island and Samoan Elders were facilitated by Samoan researchers assisted by Tokelauan, Niuean, Tongan and Cook Island cultural consultants. The *Fa'afaletui* methodology was used. Thematic analysis of the transcripts was carried out in the different Pacific languages and translated into English with the assistance of the cultural consultants. The discussions began with an illustrative example of the Samoan '*Self*' as an essential starting point for understanding different Pacific views on ageing and Eldership. Each of the specific *Fa'afaletui* (*selected research group*) found the concept of *self* relevant and identified their specific cultural concepts for the *Self*. This expanded the discussions beyond notions and experiences of being 'aged and/or elderly' to discussions of Eldership and their own definitions for this, the roles of Elders and their unique responsibilities.

Results: The Fa'afaletui focus group method has been used in this research because it provides an effective setting for the collective discussion of key matters which is "particularly significant in the light of ... Pacific practices of consensus formation and ideas of solidarity" (Goldsmith, 1993). The focus group method has been applied through the *Fa'afaletui* qualitative research methodology developed for research with Pacific people (Tamasese, et al., 1997 and 2005). The results presented here are based on the findings from the ten Fa'afaletui focus groups, and provide a basis for the planning and policy responses to growing numbers of Pacific Elders within an increasingly diverse range of communities and family settings across New Zealand.

Conclusions: The New Zealand mainstream cultural view of the self as individuated stands in contrast to the Pacific views of the self as a total being who exists in relationship to other people. Pacific concepts of Elders, Eldership and the process of ageing derive from their sense of meaning, wholeness and sacredness of their place of belonging, family, genealogy, language, culture, spirituality and the environment. Elders are increasingly valued as they age

The research findings demonstrate that in the area of age and ageing, Pacific People's cultural knowledge provides a rich basis for policies and the development of future services for Pacific Elders. The issues that the Fa'afaletui groups raised in relation to the socio-economic context and constraints which Pacific Elders face point to the need for consideration of broader social and economic factors for Pacific Peoples when addressing Pacific Elders, Eldership, age and ageing.

The context: Pacific populations in New Zealand

Pacific peoples in New Zealand make up 7.4% of the population of New Zealand as a whole (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b). The Pacific population in New Zealand is younger than other ethnic groups with a median age of 22.1 years as compared to a median age of 41.0 years for European/Pākehā and 23.9 years for Māori (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b). The Pacific population over 65 is smaller than that of other ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b). At the 2006 census Pacific people made up 2% of the population 65 years and over, an increase from 1.3% in 1996¹ (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). In comparison, Pākehā/European people made up 87.6% of the population aged 65 and over. In 2013 the percentage of Māori aged 65 years was 5.4, an increase from 4.1% in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a). Although specific data on the Pacific population from 2013 is still unavailable, the Pacific population is slightly younger than the Māori population and a lower percentage of people aged 65 years and older (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b).

In 2012/13, 87.6.1% of Pacific adults surveyed in the Ministry of Health *New Zealand Health Survey* self-identified their health as good, very good, or excellent (Ministry of Health, 2013). Analysis undertaken in 2007 by the Ministry of Social Development noted that among Pacific people aged 65 years and older 76.1% reported good, very good, or excellent health in 2002/2003 (Ministry of Social Development, 2007).² Between now and 2021 the number of Pacific Elders (65 years and over) in New Zealand is predicted to increase to 6% of the Pacific population as health outcomes improve and the current younger cohorts age (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Research by Southwick, Kenealy, and Ryan (2012) noted the difficulties experienced by Pacific Island groups, including Elders, in accessing and utilising mainstream health care in New Zealand.

Little research on ethnicity and ageing has been conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand, and even less on Pacific populations and ageing. The New Zealand Government's Positive Ageing Strategy (Ministry of Social Development, 2001) calls for recognition of the diversity of older people and affirms "the values and capacities of older Māori and Pacific people specifically, but also of people with other cultural identities" (Davey & Glasgow, 2006, p.25; see also Ministry of Social Development, 2007). More recent research by the University of Auckland with Samoan and Cook Island elders identified the need for culturally appropriate services and support, including elder care facilities and government services (Wiles, 2011). Despite the recognised need for a deeper understanding of the role played by culture and ethnicity in ageing, limited research with Pacific Elders in New Zealand has so far been undertaken and this study clearly supports the need for further work on this topic.

¹ The New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings takes place on a five yearly basis. Due to the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes the scheduled 2011 census did not take place and was instead conducted in 2013. As a result of this delay the most recent comprehensive census data is from the 2006 census. Data from the 2013 census is being released throughout 2013–2014. However detailed information from the 2013 census on the Pacific population in New Zealand is not yet publicly available. Where available 2013 census data has been used.

² The Ministry of Health do not provide age-based disaggregation in the Health Survey of New Zealand.

Method

Selection and recruitment of participants

Five Pacific cultural groups were the focus of this study: Tokelauan, Niuean, Tongan, Cook Island and Samoan Elders. Ten Fa'afaletui focus groups were held across Wellington, following a pilot Fa'afaletui group to test the guiding questions and prompts. Separate men's and women's Fa'afaletui groups were held for each of the cultural groups to enable women and men's experiences (including more sensitive discussions) to be carried out appropriately and comfortably for the participants. The numbers of participants in each group were as follows: Tokelauan 12 men and 12 women; Niuean 8 men and 10 women; Tongan 12 men and 10 women; Cook Island 12 men and 12 women; and Samoan 10 men and 14 women.

The Elder participants were recruited through Pacific community organisations, community Elders and networks within the Pacific churches. Fa'afaletui focus groups were hosted either by their specific cultural community at the venue of their choice or at the Family Centre in Lower Hutt, Wellington.

Elders were selected to include representation of their own *Motu* or island groupings, and familial leadership or Matai roles within their own families, communities and networks. Elders were also selected to include those more recently settled in New Zealand as well as those who had spent the dominant years of their lives in New Zealand.

In this study, participants over the age of 60 years were selected. Gender and relative status within the cultural community were selected as the most appropriate ways to organise the Fa'afaletui. The participants represented and were drawn from a range of roles and included familial, cultural and community leadership roles in both the women's and men's groups.

Men and women met separately to discuss the research questions with a facilitator(s) using a mix of both their own Pacific language and English. Gender separation allowed relationships and the appropriate cultural protocols to be addressed and tapu (or sacred and boundaried) issues that are inappropriate for discussion in mixed gender groups to be discussed more openly.

Question line focus

The question line and guiding prompts were tested by a pilot *Fa'afaletui* group of Elders. The questions enquired into Pacific Elders' experiences and invited their suggestions for enhancements where they thought they were needed. Areas covered with all of the Fa'afaletui groups included:

- Cultural focussed questions e.g. cultural concepts of Eldership, responsibilities and contributions, challenges and constraints, conceptual differences of dominant mainstream and Pacific perspectives and the transmission of culture.
- Living standards questions e.g. housing, living arrangements, income, health care, food security, employment, transport, access to services and clothing
- Social inclusion questions e.g. communication, safety, support, arts and pleasure, active living and information

- Spirituality questions e.g. the place of spirituality in their lives, the relationship of bodies spirits and hearts, Elders' blessings, passing onto the next stage and preparing for death.

Fa'afaletui method

Fa'afaletui is a Samoan concept that was developed by Tamasese et al in earlier research into Samoan mental health with Samoan Elders (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush 2005). Essentially, Fa'afaletui describes a method which facilitates the gathering and validation of important knowledge within a culture or in this case, within the Samoan and four other Pacific cultures. Fa'afaletui is the critical process of weaving (or *tui*) together all the different expressions of knowledge from the various groups.

Development of Fa'afaletui focus group questions

In the Pacific context, issues regarding health and wellbeing need to include as central a culturally-specific (Tokelauan, Niuean or Samoan for example) view of the 'self' in order for the discussions to have meaning. Questions were designed to learn what Elders knew would best enhance their own wellbeing as Elders. For this reason, the areas that questions covered included their own concepts of Eldership, their perception of their role in the transmission of culture, culturally defined responsibilities of Elders, conceptions about 'bodies, spirits and hearts' and spirituality alongside secular matters such as housing etc.

Fa'afaletui group facilitation

The researchers facilitated all of the Fa'afaletui sessions with the Elders of each of the cultural groups. Cultural consultants also participated in co-facilitation as they saw appropriate and the researchers encouraged this. The groups spoke in both their own Pacific languages and in English. The facilitator's role was to loosely guide the discussions, clarifying as appropriate to gather clear and useful responses for the research while encouraging participants to use their own concepts and meanings. The ten Fa'afaletui groups were held across the Wellington region.

Analysis

Each of the Fa'afaletui was audio taped after consent was obtained from all participants. The transcriptions of the Fa'afaletui sessions were carried out in the languages used during Fa'afaletui. Transcripts were proof read to ensure accuracy and checked against audio recordings. Specific Pacific language terms that were used in sessions were also checked.

The transcriptions were analysed thematically to identify what were common themes across the focus groups and what issues were unique to specific cultural and gendered groups.

The results are presented here according to the major themes that emerged in response to the question areas in the focus groups and data analysis. Each theme is illustrated with quotations from participants.

Terms used

As a result of carrying out this research we suggest an alternative way of viewing those over 60 years of age. Terms used to refer to these age groups need to be less minimising and have less of a focus on 'being old' or 'being elderly', which have negative connotations in mainstream New Zealand society. The English words we use here, *Elders* and *Eldership*, have a more sensitive and respectful connotation closer to Fa'afaletui perceptions. The term 'Elders' also symbolises how treasured they are. Capital letters are used in the same way cultural groups are described for example 'English people' or 'Wellingtonians'.

Results

Fa'afaletui concepts and definitions of Eldership and age

The Pacific Fa'afaletui discussions of concepts and definitions in their specific cultures elicited a wide range of terms and meanings which were used to describe Elder women and men within their own communities and families.

Tokelau Elders' concepts

The Tokelauan concepts for their Elders were stratified to recognise those who were older, who were described as *sinasina le ao*, referring to those whose hair had whitened with age. The Elder women are known as *Kolomatua* who looked after the whole extended family and held knowledge of their collective lands and their genealogies. In this age group *Kolomatua* were also referred to as the *Whatupaepae* or cornerstones of their families.

The Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui identified that the first group of Elder men were known as *Toeaina*. The *Toeaina* group were those in their 60s, who often held leadership roles in their *kaiga* or families. Those in their 80s and beyond were identified as *Hauatea* and/or *Kaumatua* signifying they were the village leaders and were respected above the other groups of Elders. The Tokelauan Elders' Fa'afaletui confirmed that these concepts, meanings and terms were shared across the populations of the Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu atolls.

From the Tokelauan Elders' Fa'afaletui it was clear that the eldest women and men held specific leadership roles within *Kaiga* (family) and *Nu'u* (villages) and knowledge of ancestral lands and genealogies were their specific responsibility.

Tongan Elders' concepts

The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui identified very specific categorisations which were in place prior to the arrival of Christianity and prior to the introduction of their nobility system. These terms included *Matua*, *Fafine matua* or *Tagata matua*, based on the concept of matured Elders. Post-Christianity the Tongan terms included *fafine eiki*, which the Tongan women's Fa'afaletui described as chiefly women or more generally '*tagata eiki*'. They stated that the post-colonial development of the hierarchical nobility system reduced the influence of this group. They also noted a particular gender term *Taulekaleka* which refers to the eldest women whose special role was to hold vital genealogical and familial knowledge.

The Tongan Elders' Fa'afaletui said their concepts were based on the fact that increasing age is accompanied by increased responsibilities within family and community. Both women's and men's ideas of Eldership were based on maturity closely gained through living. Increased age in their view meant greater wisdom and the ability to talk about heritage. As they matured Elders acquired the ability to teach others based on their experience and were looked to for guidance. It is this accumulated wisdom and maturity achieved by Elders that is respected by younger members of their communities.

Niue Elders' concepts

The Niue Elders Fa'afaletui spoke of the terms *matua* being the Elders of the family and *kau* meaning to respect. Their term for their Elders was *matua kau*. Elders who must be respected. The Niue Elders' Fa'afaletui also noted that while they had other terms for their Elders connected with leadership roles within the church or their village communities' *matua kau* was the most universal concept that they used to describe their most mature Elders.

Cook Island Elders' concepts

The Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui described male Elders as *Papa*, defining them as having more authority over family affairs (according to them) than the female Elders' *Mama*. The women's Fa'afaletui countered this, identifying that *Mamas* held the balancing power within the domestic sphere of daily life.

The Cook Islands' Fa'afaletui groups, drawing on their Atiu, Mitiaro and Mauke island backgrounds, put forward the term *Vouvou* denoting those senior Elders of grandparent/or great grandparent ages beyond their 70s.

Similar to other concepts shared here, the Cook Island Elders' Fa'afaletui reported they have a specific term for the Elders who had reached their 80s and beyond. This group were known as *Tangata metua*, the Elders who guide the younger populations. The Cook Island Elders confirmed that *Tangata metua* are the ones who have the final say in familial and community matters. They also had the authority and maturity to settle genealogy and land disputes.

Samoan Elders' concepts

The Samoan women Elders' Fa'afaletui shared the concept of *Olomatua*, defining it as the most mature and therefore protective 'defence post' of the Aiga or extended family, while *Toeaina* was the main term for Elder men. The Samoan concept contains the elements of Elder women being the matured and strongest protectors of their Aiga/kin, especially when difficulties arise or more literally within the context of crisis or war.

For Samoans the Elders' roles include leadership as in *Matai* or leader of a family, extended family, village, and church. These Matai roles are leadership roles, and are life long without any notion of retirement. While there were not any strict age categorisations identified by the Samoan Elders' Fa'afaletui the commitment and responsibilities of these roles continue and require their fulfilment for the benefit of the communal and extended Aiga/family.

Eldership is perceived by the Samoan Elders Fa'afaletui to be based on maturity of judgement or *Moe o le Tofa*, rather than being about age or physical ageing. The women Elders agreed that Eldership was not so age bound and it can be seen in two specific groupings – those who are not so active and being cared for by their families or *Matua tausí* and those who were active and largely independent Elder women *Olomatua* and men *Toeaina*.

The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui expressed the view that 'the aged and the elderly' are New Zealand social constructs that are age bound and ascribe certain attributes that

constrain them as Elders from living life fully. In their view, prevailing concepts based on 'age' were limiting (as they are for most older people) and did not take into account their own realities as they continued to participate and make their contribution within their families, churches and communities. For them there was no sense of 'retirement' or minimising of their lives.

Stages of Eldership

As seen above some of the Pacific Fa'afaletui reported highly specific categorisations for the different social roles of Elders, so among some Pacific groups represented in this study Elder years and Eldership can be conceived of in stages.

Ae oo ina fai mafutaga e iai au matutua foi lele valu sefulu ia ona tau lea o le Toeaina.

When we have gatherings we include those male Elders who have reached their 80s and these Elders we identify as Toeaina.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui

The metaphor of 'white hair' was used to signal the advanced experience and maturity of Elders. According to the Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui their Elders' 'white hair' was the first physical signal to their communities that they now stood apart from the younger generations. It is at this stage that Elders are prioritised in the distribution of food and other community resources and a time when they began to have a primary voice in collective decision making.

*...e ave le faamuamua i e ua sinasina latou ao
We put our Elders with whitening hair the first consideration*

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui

The Tokelauan Fa'afaletui members identified the next stage for Eldership when male Elders were known as *Hauatea*. When women reached this stage they become known as *Kolomatua*. These two groups of Elders are the ones that hold the most revered positions in relationship to the younger populations. This group of Elders hold this position as it is they who are the literate ones in the physical, spiritual and oceanic worlds which channel climate and agricultural abundance in their unique environment.

The Samoan concept for Elder women is *Olomatua*, and is literally translated as the most mature of defences. The *Olo* is defined as the defence post relied upon in times of crisis and war. *Matua* means matured. *Olomatua* then provides a guiding metaphor for the role of older Samoan women within their families, villages and genealogies.

The Samoan Fa'afaletui explained maturity within the meaning of *Olomatua*. The stage of being recognised as an *Olomatua* was no longer solely achieved by age: younger people in their forties are being recognised as *Olomatua* or *Toeaina* now. The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group explained that Eldership was now largely determined by balancing leadership, maturity and age.

Olomatua is also used in Samoa for a young person in leadership of a family...they might be in their 40s for example so Eldership is not only to do with age, it's to do with leadership and it's to do with maturity of judgement...so it's both to do with age...and also maturity

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui

The other stage Samoan Elders spoke of was defined as a time when they were in their eighties. This was a time when their ages and their roles would transform into primarily teaching roles transmitting to their younger kin *Tofiga* or roles and responsibilities and their *Faasinomaga* or heritage.

The Cook Island Fa'afaletui groups also differentiated among stages of Eldership: the 'Papa' and 'Mama' levels of parenthood and/or being grandparents and then the next stage of *Vouvou*³, the more senior Elders over 80 years of age.

These graduated stages of Eldership maybe less perceptible to younger people growing up in New Zealand, but appear to be clearly defined for the Elders themselves. The graduated stages of Eldership seem to take into account the fact that if Elders in their 60s and 70s were still living in their home islands, they would likely be participating in daily agricultural, familial, community and church activities. Those over 80 were often less physically active but would become a central point upon whom their families would focus their attention and care. Differentiation of this type occurred across all groups.

Roles and Responsibilities of Elders

For Pacific People life is often lived as relational participants within kin based networks. The Elders in these interconnected networks are responsible for leading their kin towards positive physical and spiritual wellbeing. Exercising their roles and responsibilities with wisdom and maturity is the way Pacific Elders contribute to their kin and communities.

The responsibilities of Tokelauan Elders are enacted through their leadership in matters of governance within their villages as well as exercising authority and leadership within their kin networks.

*Tofiga o le Aumatutua i le faatoelau ...pulega o Nu'u ...pulega o Aiga
Within Tokelauan custom the role and responsibility of Elders is to provide leadership within village governance ... they have the authority of leadership within the extended family.*

Tokelau men's Fa'afaletui group

Conflict or disagreement that arose within the Tokelauan community or village meetings would be resolved by the most senior Elders as they had the final say. Elders brought words of settlement into their meetings in order to bring peace.

³ Vouvou is a term more commonly used to describe the most senior Elders. Men in this age group are 'Tane vouvou' and women as 'Waine vouvou'. The Cook Islands Fa'afaletui informed that these terms were most often used in the Atiu, Mitiaro and Mauke islands' languages.

The Tokelau men's Fa'afaletui explained it was also the responsibility of Elders to transmit their genealogical knowledge to their younger kin. The Elder men gave the example that it is their specific responsibility to teach younger men fishing skills including teaching their navigational skills using the stars.

The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui described Elders' responsibilities as being leaders of families, extended families and churches. These roles were life-long responsibilities which they found to be a joy to fulfil but at times financial constraints tended to limit and 'disable' their fuller participation. The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui similarly raised their responsibilities as including oversight of their extended family and kin both here in New Zealand, Samoa, Australia and the USA. The men talked about their earlier life and roles preparing them for the entry to being Elders as though they were preparing to enter a new life phase.

I am looking at the door of 60 plus. How do we get to that door of life? We start that journey from within our families because we are responsible to build our families; we are responsible to build up our economic and social strengths.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Contributions made by Elders

Across the Fa'afaletui it was clear that Elders were in their most important life stage. It is a time when they are most relevant to the futures of their kin descendants. They have been contributors as they have matured and helped to build the strength of their families and communities. In New Zealand the contributions of Elders is also evident in the places of belonging that earlier generations built. Pacific Elders built the Pacific churches, communities and places of belonging for the present generations.

Elders throughout their earlier lives have created many opportunities for their families and communities. The kinds of contributions they make change over time as they gain in maturity.

"Our thinking...the way we conceive of ourselves as contributing members is important ...compared to mainstream cultures they tend to minimise their contributions and they withdraw and 'retire' as they get older whereas we continue to make contributions even though the nature of the contributions changes over time.."

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group

The Cook Island Elders Fa'afaletui group spoke of continuing to want to make their contribution as Elders even though they may be on reduced incomes or superannuation. They gave examples where some Elders were so strongly motivated to make their contribution towards their community and church events that they would go without some food to be able make a monetary contribution.

I find that even when Elders don't have enough money they still want to give ...they always find the way somehow because they feel they must make this contribution that's the way they are, that's our way...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Some may frown on these contributions being made, and indeed it can be a source of conflict and complaint in some families. On the other hand looking at this issue from the perspective of Elders we can see that Elders are giving monetary contributions that are for the benefit of their entire family and that these contributions signal their Kaiga/kin's active participation in extended family and Cook Island community events. Making a contribution also signals their own and their Kaiga/kin's ongoing relevance.

It should also be remembered that if Elders made the same contribution in their home islands there would be less risk to their food security as they usually live in kin based communities and in environments with access to abundant food plantations. In New Zealand Elders make decisions about their discretionary income knowing that they will often be supported financially by their children and grandchildren because their children will strive to ensure their overall physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing is maintained.

Challenges and Constraints

Challenges to cultural heritage transmission caused by living in New Zealand

The most pressing of all the challenges that was raised consistently across the Fa'afaletui groups was the way that New Zealand life and dominant mainstream values about ageing and older people are challenging Pacific values and practices in relation to Elders.

The Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui spoke of the tendency of lack of respect for older people in mainstream New Zealand, which is affecting the way younger Cook Island people behave and speak to their Elders now.

It's harder now to teach younger people the ways of our culture, like respect for Elders as they are surrounded by such different values and more liberal ways ...which is having negative impacts on us and our ability to influence and teach our moko

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui

Cook Island women and men raised the same challenge, finding that their *moko* or grandchildren had become more reactive, and sometimes disrespectful towards them in ways that would never be acceptable in the Cook Islands.

In New Zealand it's a different way, but back home whatever Elders say you obey, that's it – whether they are right or wrong, you just follow because you have to listen.

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

The men felt that the impact and challenge of New Zealand mainstream culture on their own cultural practices caused a loss. The time needed and explanation by Elders wanting to transmit important heritage information was not being taken as seriously or respected as much as some Elders had hoped. Elders described their narrative ways of teaching their *moko* by using their voices, stories and words. The metaphor Elders used for conveying their heritage narratives was one of 'feeding words' to their *moko*.

We raise our moko with words, we feed them words that will pass on what's needed for the next generations ...I know we have some wisdom and knowledge and I try to tell my moko you have to take these words and eat them so that you can pass it down to your children ...and sometimes they say "you silly old man you don't eat words"

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Again the Cook Island women raised their worries about the kinds of cultural knowledge gaps that had appeared in the generations growing up in New Zealand. Women had observed that over the past 20 years there has been a substantial drift away from their own cultural practices in relation to Elders and that this was now starting to influence behaviour 'back home' in the Cook Islands. As Elder women whose roles were to ensure the survival and transmission of their culture into the future they were really worried that their culture was under such challenge and threat that it might soon be gone.

In the last 20 years ...the generations coming now you can see there is no more respect for anybody...nobody is going to look after Elders especially in our own community ... we are really worried that given the gaps here in New Zealand and how these are impacting at home that some of our culture is dying ...it won't be long.

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui

At the time of the 2006 census⁴ there were 58,008 Cook Island people in New Zealand and 21, 388 residents in the Cook Islands. The majority of the younger and maturing populations are growing up and living in New Zealand which is a highly challenging context for their own cultural values.

The Cook Island Elders' Fa'afaletui consistently identified their biggest concern and challenge as the formidable level of difference between the ways in which younger and older generations are now interacting. The contrast between the Cook Islands Elders' generations and the younger generations is sharper when seen in relationship to the other Pacific Fa'afaletui groups highlighted here.

Yearning for home

When discussing perceptions and experiences of their safety, the Tokelauan women Elders found their Porirua communities safe but the vast differences between the highly urbanised city of Porirua and their own environment in the Tokelaus caused them to yearn for home.

Most of us feel safe here...but we get homesick...

Tokelauan women Fa'afaletui group

The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui said they stay on in New Zealand because this is where their grandchildren are being raised, but they yearn to return home as their lives would be very different as Elders 'back home'.

⁴ Most recent census data, see footnote 1

If they were in Tonga they would go fishing, and do many things...always doing something with their minds ...they might stay here ...but their heart is in Tonga.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Yearning to return home was one of the responses that Cook Island Elder men had to the changes to their cultures that they were witnessing in New Zealand. The women too pined for home.

At home there is always someone close by who would help out and those who lived nearby are relatives too – aunts and uncles ...so there is always someone to help and care for the Elders.

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

The Cook Island men's yearnings were so strong that it actually led to some of them returning home. Some had also packed up and gone home but found that the friends and family that they had left behind had also left the Cook Islands in order to look for work in neighbouring Pacific nations. These male Elders had then returned to New Zealand as a result of the changes they found 'back home'.

[Looking after grandchildren as a contribution and a challenge](#)

The close and affectionate relationship between the Elder participants and their grandchildren was spoken of as a joy in their lives. Some Elders were actively engaged with their grandchildren on a daily basis as they lived together in a shared household. These Elders enjoyed being able to share their days with their grandchildren and play with them, and some women Elders particularly enjoyed sharing their bedrooms with a grandchild.

Niue Elder women found their grandchildren and great grandchildren a source of happiness and a primary motivation to stay well and healthy so that they could see their grandchildren grow up.

For some Elders living in close proximity with their families also meant that, in order for their children to work fulltime to support their multigenerational households, Elders carried responsibilities for the care of their grandchild or grandchildren as their contribution to the household.

Tokelauan women Elders raised a concern about the pressures that this can create for Elders whose bodies are not as agile as they used to be. They acknowledged that while their grandchildren are precious, the pressure to help with their care needed to be balanced so that Elders could have a break and enjoy some fun activities too.

I have seen some Elders out with their grandkids and they look so heavy under pressure here in New Zealand ... maybe it would be good to get them help with the children so they can have a break and have some fun.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group.

Resources that Elders contribute to their kin and communities

Leadership and wisdom

Eldership encompasses the roles of leadership as in a Samoan *Matai* or Tokelauan *Kaumatua*. Elders are responsible for leading family, extended family, village, and church communities. As noted above, the leadership roles of Elders are life-long. Pacific Elders are committed to these relationships and their responsibilities continue as part of maintaining the relationships.

One thing you can get from our Elders is words of wisdom, these are the people you look up to for advice, who we respect for their wisdom ...we not only use their wisdom up but that wisdom ...faoga e taitai ai aiga, taitai ai nuu...and guides leadership within the extended family and villages ...

Tokelauan Elder men

Tongan Elders confirmed that their Elders are looked to for their wisdom, gained by their experiences and knowledge of life. Access to the precious wisdom of Elders is the basis of their motivation to care well for their Elders.

Elders are the resource people who built the Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand to be resilient and built places to gather like the churches in this country. These resources have been shared with all of the Pacific generations growing up in New Zealand.

The Elders are resource people, especially those who built up the communities here in Aotearoa New Zealand to share with all of us...they have heaps to tell about how you survive, what they did and what other things need to be learned and what to be careful of...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Maturity gained through 'life tests'

Samoan Fa'afaletui perceptions of *Matua* or maturity were not so strongly age based but were defined according to the responsibilities being carried out. Ultimately, Samoan concepts of Eldership were seen to be about maturity of judgement or *Moe o le Tofa*. Elders yearned to be able to use their life experience and maturity to continue to be contributing members of families and society. Positive wellbeing for Samoan male Elders is achieved through these processes being lived out within their families and communities.

The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui saw the next resource they had earned was their arrival at a more harmonious life stage having been through the 'life tests' like drinking, smoking and the risky behaviours of youth and early adulthood. The Samoan men described going through these 'tests' as individuals: these experiences have contributed to their maturity which strengthened their focus on the collective health of their Aiga/kin groups. From this position of greater collective wellbeing the men felt that their Aiga/kin groups were able to better prioritise spiritual and other familial responsibilities.

I have known what alcohol is and I have left that behind. I have known what it is to be a smoker and no longer do that. I know that I must live more healthily in body

and spirit now so we can have greater health which prepares our Aiga to attend to church and family responsibilities.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Many Elders had stayed relevant and active or *Gaioi* and therefore retained their mental, physical and spiritual health, alertness and independence. This enabled them to continue to contribute to their family, church or village responsibilities and events, without being dependent on other people.

Conceptualising and harmonising relationships

The general consensus amongst the Fa'afaletui focus group members was that one of their greatest resources as Elders was the ability to *Faasoa le Mafaufau*, that is, to conceptualise, articulate and harmonise disjuncture in relationships and other life situations.

Tokelauan Elders spoke of Elders' strengths and resources being their wisdom about life situations which gave them higher levels of knowing. The Elders were the ones with resources that you could go to because they were able to conceptualise and advise based on their experiences and *lava le iloa* or knowledge gained. It was from Elders' knowledge that younger people were empowered because Elders are perceived as the advice 'channel' or pathway to restoring relationships or *su'e iai le faasino ala*.

Women Elders as holders of specific heritage knowledge within some Pacific cultures

The Tongan Fa'afaletui identified Elders as very much the connecting point or juncture between family heritage from the past and its transmission to the future through current generations.

The Tongan women's Fa'afaletui identified the *Taulekaleka* or the eldest women within families as holding vital genealogical and familial knowledge. It is their role to pass this vital knowledge on to future generations.

The taulekaleka's role is to teach...to talk about the past, talk about life stories, their heritage and pass on their wisdom...it's their roles as they are the ones that know most about our family...

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Knowledge of older traditions

There was also a general consensus amongst the Fa'afaletui groups that Elders had strengths that helped to prepare the younger generations such as their knowledge of older traditions and ways of explaining and teaching these.

The Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group spoke of how the Elder men's experience in their oceanic environment meant that they possessed a lot of knowledge that had been taught to them and tested during their own youth.

The Elders before us knew the open sea, how to fish and the types of fish that were best and the best times to fish for them. It was they who knew how to

read the stars ...they knew the old traditions and knowledge to be transmitted to younger generations...

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui had similar views. They described Elders being looked to for their wisdom and knowledge of life. These resources formed the basis of their reciprocal and respectful relationship with their Elders.

We look after them for their wisdom...for their knowledge about life and they are respected because of that wisdom and we look after them...

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Differences between perceptions of Pakeha mainstream and Pacific concepts of Eldership

All of the Elders' Fa'afaletui discussed the differences between the ways that they felt mainstream Pakeha New Zealand categorised and perceived them compared with their own perceptions, realities and roles within their own families and communities.

Tokelauan Elders described the Pakeha mainstream way of considering the years after 65 as being a time when elders were 'rested' or retired as in *ua fa'amalōlō* because they were considered to be less active and less able to contribute. However, they pointed out that within the '*fa'a Pasefika*', or Pacific practices and perceptions, being 65 years of age and over was the time when Elders reached their peak or *sili ona aogā*. In their view they are at their most useful to their families and communities when they were over 60 years of age.

Most of the Pacific Elders reported that living within the daily context of New Zealand has caused changes in the ways younger people interact with and perceive them. However, one Fa'afaletui group identified that there were some positives to being a smaller Pacific population group compared with the others. Tokelauan Elder women considered their roles and the ways they carried these out had remained unchanged between life in New Zealand and Tokelau. They felt that the respect for them as *Kolomatua* had been able to be maintained in New Zealand despite the pressures of living within a dominant culture. They felt that this was due to being a smaller community where all of the Tokelauan families knew one another. This helped them to maintain their structures and monitor the practices of young people in relation to Elders.

We think it's easier to keep the respect because we are smaller in number and we all know each other so it's easier to keep our young ones respectful

Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group.

A different perspective emerged from the Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group. Women Elders felt that their young people's values are undergoing changes in relation to their interactions with Elders. They gave examples where Elders were experiencing being treated with a lack of respect, and said that their young people's behaviour was beginning to resemble that of young 'Papaa' or mainstream New Zealanders.

Some of the women Elders were finding it harder to teach their young people the kinds of values that were central to the respect for Elders and found that this behaviour were more likely when they are together with their own senior generations.

We want them to be respectful but it's hard to teach our younger ones ...it goes in one ear and goes out the other...that's the difference ...but when you try and get to the younger ones it's very hard...maybe because it's happening around us over here...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

The solution to what some felt to be a loss of cultural heritage amongst the younger generations was that they must not let go of young people's heritage. Elders have a critical role to teach young people and ensure that they have ongoing access to their cultures in order to counter the corrosive impacts of raising their young within another culture in New Zealand.

Transmission of Pacific heritage and cultures in the New Zealand context

The transmission and passing on of cultural heritage is the province of Elders who are both the guardians and the teachers of more detailed cultural knowledge. Within many Pacific traditions the central purpose of Elders' lives includes their ability to act as guardians and pass on their heritage to their descendants. This was certainly how Tokelauan Elder men and women understood their roles and their need to prepare themselves for this specific responsibility.

*Tapena ina ia taumafai e pasi atu le tū ma le aga i tamaiti
(Prepare well in order to be able to pass onto our children our practices and values)*

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

Tokelauan Elders, having prepared themselves well, then expected their younger men and women to be open to learning the skills of living as Tokelauans so that they would become familiar and take into their own lives the knowledge of the Tokelauan gender and age protocols, cultural ways and traditions. Alongside these complex areas of knowledge Elders wanted to pass on the practicalities about food security and how to cultivate and harvest Tokelauan foods within the oceanic context of Tokelau. Teaching young Tokelauans these 'survival skills' is what Elders felt was important as well as facilitating a sense of belonging for younger Tokelauan generations growing up in New Zealand.

We expect them to deal with and learn the older traditions...knowing how to understand the open sea, how we live in Tokelau...how we fish, how to read the stars, what kind of fish we will get at a particular month ...so we expect them to have a lot of knowledge about our living conditions and be able to transmit that knowledge on to generations.

Tokelau men's Fa'afaletui

Tokelauan Elders suggested other active means to facilitate transmission in New Zealand. The Elder men discussed the way that churches, community activities and family reunions have been beneficial for transmitting cultural knowledge and skill. Reunions and gatherings of families and *motu* or island groups have created environments for young and Elders to be together. During this time young kin have the opportunity to learn their language and learn other cultural skills directly from their Elders while growing up and raising their own children in New Zealand.

Every Tokelauan family every few years has a reunion, they always mafuta (gather). There are a lot of families who hold on to knowledge to be passed down, not all of it is written down so to be able to pass it down we do this at reunions. It happens at our family gatherings so for the last three years our uncles have discussed our family tree and genealogy. I know all the other families are starting to do things like this too and once they plan a gathering they are doing the same thing...passing history and culture on.

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

Tokelauan Elders said carrying out cultural transmission in the context of New Zealand meant that they had begun adapting their usual practices to the new context. This adaptation means that families that now live away from their home *motu* or islands are still able to be included and can still get access to their heritage from their Elders even though they are raised in New Zealand.

A couple of weeks ago ...we were sharing our family tree books or history books...we are very competitive people and we don't like to fail but at the same time we have our own skills...each family has their own fishing skills and for a few years we decided not to hide them to ourselves but to share ...so one of the things about our Elders today is that they don't keep the knowledge to themselves they share it around including the family tree books...

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

Elders point out that for them, the fact that young people are growing up in New Zealand should not prevent access to their heritage. Elders can pave the way, and be prepared and adaptable within the contemporary context to pass on cultural heritage to young people.

Both men and women Elders carried out teaching and cultural transmission roles. Tokelauan women considered it was important that their distinctive weaving skills were encouraged so that Tokelauan children raised in New Zealand could grow up confident and competent in both their Tokelauan and mainstream New Zealand skills for living. The Elder women identified the need to find ways to ensure weaving materials were available, for example, not only to sustain the activities of Elders themselves but also for the benefit of teaching and passing their heritage on to young people.

In New Zealand we still have some weaving groups but they need the materials and people have to bring them in...we need materials to be in steady supply so Elders can keep their weaving skills up... and little ones see it being done.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

The more senior *Toeaina*, *Olomatua* or *Vouvou* Elders amongst the Fa'afaletui groups perceived the role of cultural knowledge transmission as critical because in their view cultural heritage is the means to sustain the wellbeing of their families and genealogies in the future.

The Vouvou (senior Elders) is our guide ...we listen to them, they give us wisdom, they guide us with language and culture ...and show the next generation how to take care of one another.

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui

Ways in which heritage and culture transmission can be supported include the establishment of Pacific language nests, inclusion of Pacific languages and culture within school curricula and within home environments. Cook Island and Niue Elders both raised the need not only for greater commitment of Elders to the transmission of heritage and culture but also greater understanding by younger generations of their value so they commit to learning as well.

Transmission of culture? Sometimes yes, sometimes no...the younger generation sometimes are not ready to listen and sometimes they see what the Elders are sharing as old fashioned.

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

Some community development support is needed to facilitate greater engagement between Elders and their young people so that young people can more fully appreciate the value of their own heritage and cultural knowledge within their lives and futures. This appreciation is critical, even if they are primarily located in New Zealand, so future generations do not lose their cultural heritage.

There is an added complexity in the cultural transmission task for Cook Islands people as there are cultural differences across their 15 islands. This means that processes need to take this diversity into account and be deliberately planned in order to make the process smoother for both Elders and younger people.

Our kids are preoccupied and it needs some structured in times to help Elders to make the teaching easier...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Cultural transmission and cultural guardianship was sometimes a difficult area for some of the Fa'afaletui groups to reflect on. Fa'afaletui groups differed in approach and orientation to transmitting heritage and culture. It was an area that Fa'afaletui groups acknowledged needed greater leadership, coordination and consistent commitment from both the Elders as well as their descendants. This was particularly concerning as English was increasingly becoming the language of transmission. Cook Island men, for example, thought this might change the values that were transmitted.

...the transmission of cultures to young people ...there is a weakness that this is mainly being transmitted in English with our kids here.

Cook Island Men's Fa'afaletui group

The Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui also raised the need for greater leadership and coordination in the transmission of languages and for community education projects that could increase the pace of transmitting their culture to the younger generations growing up in New Zealand.

Our loss of culture is what we are always talking about on our Cook Island radio talk back...but we need our community leaders to talk about this problem and creating kohanga reo schools for our languages here so the kids can learn our languages – this is the most important concern for us now...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

In Tongan families and households the Tongan women Elders said the *Taulekaleka* eldest women are very engaged in transmitting Tongan culture and language to their children and grandchildren.

The role of Taulekaleka is that they talk about the past, talk about life stories, heritage...their wisdom is there in their families, and it's their roles because they are the ones that know most.

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

The Tongan women's Fa'afaletui raised their concerns about the younger generation's access to and maintenance of their Tongan language abilities. They recognised that increasing and maintaining language skills will require ongoing commitment to developing language nests and planned intergenerational contact between their Elders, families and communities. Elders will need all of their skill, position of influence and discipline to ensure their grandchildren and great grandchildren become fluent in their heritages, and language(s).

I'm a grandmother, it's very hard. Every time I speak to our grandson at home, he speaks back in English, even though we all speak Tongan at home. The Tongan language is always there and I try to get him to listen. Discipline is really hard...what other grandmothers go through this? You have to be really consistent and you have to be disciplined or they won't know anything...

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Tongan women acknowledged (as others had) that they as Elders needed to be disciplined and focused in order for their grandchildren to successfully access and learn their culture and language.

The Pacific churches already have a role in the maintenance and support of Pacific language and cultures. Tongan men pointed out that the churches can and do play an increasingly important supportive role in the transmission of Tongan language and culture.

The only way is to have a centre, to run a language nest, to run a school where the Elders can run everything in Tongan, where the Elders will enjoy their own language ...we can do that in our Tongan church every week

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Some of the Samoan women and male Elders had not fully grasped their transmission role until hearing others in their Fa'afaletui group speaking of its critical importance. Some Elders acknowledged the complexity of the task that needed to be carried out in the New Zealand context. Despite this, the discussion of the responsibilities of cultural transmission motivated and re-energised Elders to become more focused on this responsibility as Elders.

Culture is not seen as separate from our life activities. However, on reflection I can see now how our young ones have missed out on being taught our ways of doing things... how to prepare, apportion and serve foods in Samoan ways...we need to focus on this difficult area further.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Survival of the culture into the future

In the discussion of the responsibilities and issues generated by transmission of culture attention inevitably turned to Elders' concerns about the survival of their culture in the hands of younger people.

Tongan Elders were asked to identify their own contribution to the younger generations in order for their culture to survive. They responded saying that Elders needed to teach younger people the following kinds of lessons:

Passing on knowledge about handling stress; keeping themselves focussed on life's important lessons; and teaching young people values that will help us work well together.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

The Elders were asked to identify some of the strengths that they saw in young people that gave them confidence in the survival of their cultures. This provided another good point of reflection for many.

Tokelauan Elder women identified examples such as the participation of Tokelauan young people in their atoll community choir activities. This gave them confidence in young people's interest in their Tokelauan language and their positive energy to be engaged in activities with their Elders. Other strengths which inspired the confidence of Elders in their young people included educational achievements and maintaining the values of caring for Elders as they would be in Tokelau. The Elders took the question away to reflect upon.

We are very proud of our grandchildren's education ...We know we will be cared for in New Zealand as well as we are in Tokelau ...That's a very good question to take away with us.

Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group

Housing for Elders

Living conditions for Elders

The living conditions for some of the Elders were concerning. Tongan Elders said living in cold damp conditions in Housing New Zealand homes that had been built over 50 years ago was a major cause of Tongan Elders getting the flu and worse in winter months. Tongan Elders suggested that all Elders' accommodation owned by Housing New Zealand needed to be insulated and/or renovated in order to make it warmer and to prevent these dangerous illnesses amongst Elders.

Cold and dampness in housing that was built 50 – 70 years ago causes flu and illness so insulation is needed in accommodation where Elders live. They should renovate the Elders housing and make it suitable and available for older folks.

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Tongan women Elders had raised their concerns with local Housing New Zealand officers but they found the experience frustrating.

Talking to government departments like Housing New Zealand about this is like talking to a brick wall but it shouldn't be.

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Living arrangements

Housing for many Pacific Elders was largely determined by what was affordable, given their primary source of income was Superannuation.

One of the solutions raised by the Tokelauan women Elders to the problem of houses that were too small for the extended family was to build extensions so that Elders could live in close proximity to their children and grandchildren.

Yes, we need to have our young ones have extensions in their houses so that the Elders can live with them and our families look after us.

Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group

This idea was also put forward by the Tokelauan men who suggested that the Government needed to offer financial incentives so their families could build extensions or 'granny flats' as was possible in the past. Tokelauan women identified overcrowding as a serious problem for many Tokelauan families in New Zealand. This was a recent problem for Tokelauans growing up in New Zealand as overcrowding was not an issue in the Tokelaus where their families live in much bigger houses.

The small sizes of our homes in New Zealand is causing big problems and pressures on families...our houses in Tokelau are bigger and we are not so overcrowded.

Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group

Within the Tongan Fa'afaletui groups Elders also wanted to live together with their families but having their own spaces would make it easier and they could live more independently while remaining connected within a family household of younger kin. Tongan Elders felt it was important for older people to have the choice and not to be constricted.

Even though we are all Tongan, sometimes we want to be independent.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Tokelauan Elders also proposed lower cost loans being made available so their families could renovate and enlarge their homes to accommodate its intergenerational members. This would allow families to build on separate spaces for Elders to live comfortably 'within' their family households and address the current overcrowding that some Elders were experiencing.

The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group said their constrained incomes meant they were limited to housing that was too small to accommodate their families comfortably, and it was often located well away from their familial and church based communities and support services.

The most important thing is Aiga, and we need to live close to where they are

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Elders acknowledged that while they sometimes preferred to live independently there were intergenerational differences between what they as Elders wanted and what arrangements their families preferred for their ongoing care.

Younger generations of New Zealand-raised children wanted to care for their own parents or grandparents. However, carrying out these responsibilities also placed the younger generation in a bind as they tried to balance the need to work in order to support their whole household's needs.

...from their own hearts they don't want to put their Elderly parents in the home because it's our responsibility and then for the

younger generation the question is "who is going to look after them at home?"

I need to go and work to feed the younger generation...you can't look after the Elderly in the nursing home as well as you can if they are at home with you...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

What both the Elders and the younger people agreed on was that the care of Elders was simpler, supported and possible within a communal village context. The Elders said that if they were carrying out the same responsibility at home in the Pacific the village structure would support the care of Elders better than the nuclear household living arrangements of New Zealand. In the New Zealand context if each household or family is caring for their own Elders the pressures grow if there are inadequate familial, government or community supports.

...back home there is always someone there even the neighbours are there the aunties and the uncles are there to look after the Elderly that's what we do back home but here it is a different story ...each family has to look after their own.

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Living separately but staying connected

The Elders were drawn from the generations that came to New Zealand and worked together to build the Pacific communities that younger generations have benefited from. It is not surprising that in their Elder years they may want to continue to live just as independently as they did earlier.

The Niuean women Elders group strongly preferred to live independently of their families. While they recognised their families felt the responsibility to care for them their own preference was to live independently and separately relying on their own incomes and entitlements.

We want to be independent.

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

For others independent living was defined as living interdependently attached to their children's homes. The majority much preferred to live with family members, while the least preferred option was living in a residential home for the Elderly, with periodic visits to their families.

One Niue Elder's preference was to relocate further away from her family but to be close enough for her children to visit with their grandchildren.

I told [my children] I am very happy to go and stay in a home like Rita Angus, but not too close to family ...so that they have to come and visit me.

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

There were different preferences within the Tokelauan Fa'afaletui groups. While the men acknowledged that some Elders, especially women, preferred to live independently of family until it was no longer feasible, the strongest preference was to live with their children and for children to care for them as Elders.

We prefer to live with our children...

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

When Elders expressed a preference for independent living arrangements, this did not mean their children and families would live their lives without inclusion or consultation with them. Elders did expect their families and extended families to maintain their contact and oversight of their needs even when they lived in separate locations.

The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui raised the example of how living independently, but still connected within family, was beneficial for them as Elders as well as for the wider family. An Elder shared how his wellbeing had suffered because of overcrowding but being able to move with his grandson to a shared flat had increased his sense of *fiafia*

or contentment, smoothed a number of his stresses and improved the relationships within his wider family.

I think that staying together with my children does not bring me fiafia or contentment. I have heart problems but I am so thankful for my years... but for me I want to be able to reach 'fiafia' or contentment through living independently on my own with one of my grandsons...it works out much better for us all. So now we share a flat and I am much happier now....It's true that if I am fiafia I feel stronger and healthier and my mental and emotional health is much better.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Financial support for households caring for their Elders

Tokelauan Elder men supported caring for Elders by their families in the family home, but felt this needed to be financially supported in order for it to be sustainable for Tokelauan families. In addition, men and women Elders across the Fa'afaletui consistently recommended that more financial support for Elder care needed to be provided by government. Family carers looking after Pacific Elders within their households needed to be paid in the same way staff of residential nursing homes are paid for their services. This would allow family members to give up employment but not income in order to care for their Elders. It would mean that Elders' wellbeing was prioritised and families would feel they were carrying out their cultural obligations, which will also lead to greater satisfaction and connection between Elders and their younger kin.

We should look after our own and be paid to do this at the same rates that would be paid if Elders were in residential nursing homes. It would work better for everyone.

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group.

The carer role is the province of women in Tokelauan families and Elders gave examples of Tokelauan women giving up their paid employment in order to look after Elders. Elders were nevertheless very concerned that while families wanted to care for them themselves, giving up paid employment to do so was a disincentive and caused hardship and stress on families, their relationships and the quality of care they could provide for their Elder kin.

The Tokelauan women's solution was that government agencies needed to communicate better with specific Pacific communities about actual entitlements for Elder care under current policy. The women also recommended that the Government needed to address this inequitable situation by making changes to current policy to make it economically viable for Pacific families to choose to care for their Elders.

The government will pay more to a stranger to come and care for my family than I can be paid if I stayed home...But the best person to care for family is family. Our old people really prefer to have our own people caring for them.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

Tongan women Elders also reached consensus that the Government needs to give greater financial support to establish homes for Elders, particularly if the Government is unwilling to assist Tongan families to care for their own Elders within their households. Some Fa'afaletui members have experienced government service providers side-stepping this issue by saying Pacific peoples' preference to care for their Elders is a customary cultural practice. Therefore it does not justify state funding support.

They don't assist us to care for our own Elders ...they say we do it because 'it is our custom'.

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Clearly, a consistent and well communicated policy approach is required in order for Elders to receive the best care and for them to be able to choose the kind of care arrangements that work for them as well as their wider kin group.

While many preferred to have their own children care for them within their households Cook Island women Elders also acknowledged their children are busy people and incomes were important to sustain their extended families as much as their specific households.

Cook Island women raised the issues of families needing to work which meant that their Elders were without company and time with their families. These negatives, as observed by the Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui, affected Elders' mental and spiritual health which diminished their enjoyment of life. Without the ongoing support, connection and company of their families the women said that they as Elders would feel they were a burden on their children and they would pray asking for their lives to be shortened and their children alleviated of the burden of caring for them.

If you are lucky with your children and your grandchildren ...they come back for you ...and stay with you ...and if not what we sometimes do is we pray to God to take us because there is no one to look after the Elders

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

When asked what would happen when family members had to work even though Elders needed someone to stay at home with them fulltime the Tokelauan women Elders said they rely on their extended families and communities at those times.

When our Elders are sick we have to rely on one another. We don't have to pay them money but we ask each other to help to care for our Elders.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

The Tokelauan women cited the example of times when they as carers become too sick to care for their Elders and their family systems swing in action enabling them to call on one another. Elders care is then shared and continues without interruption.

I have to leave my parents to go to work...But if I get sick one of my brothers picks up.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group.

The discussion of this issue by Tokelauan, Niue, Tongan, Cook Island and Samoan Elders highlighted the ways in which their presence in their families, whether resident in the same household or living externally, created a system founded on their cultural values of collective organisation. It was possible to gauge how strongly cultural groups were still strongly interconnected around their Elders by the discussions in the different cultural Fa'afaletui groups.

It was also clear that the population groups which had brought up more than three generations in New Zealand were under strong challenges that are changing their communal organisational patterns around the care of their Elders. The positioning of Elders within each of the specific cultures needs to be restored, enhanced and strengthened further as Elders are the cornerstone and basis of familial and communal systems as part of the present generation's heritage.

Whatupaepae, our eldest women, are the cornerstone of the family; she's the one that is looked up to by the family and extended family.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group.

Culturally based Elder care as a response to the Pacific context

Tokelauan Elders suggested that their Elders would benefit from being able to establish their own residential home. In this innovative idea Elders would be able to enjoy their time together, speaking their own language, enjoying their own familiar foods, carrying out their own activity programmes and playing dominoes. They suggested that this would help them feel contented and as though they were living together in Tokelau again.

It would be good to have an old people's home for Tokelauan people – it would be like the Elders would be living in Tokelau aye?

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

The Tokelauan women Elders' proposal for a culturally based Elder care facility is becoming increasingly relevant in the current context of improving health outcomes and the growing proportion of Pacific Elders within the New Zealand population. Culturally based Elder care could mean that Tokelauan Elders spend their Elder years in more holistically satisfying environments which are likely to increase their overall wellbeing. This would have the flow on benefit of improving their ability to continue their contribution to their communities and New Zealand society.

This innovative proposal by women Elders needs urgent and further exploration given the impact that climate change is imposing on the environment of Tokelau and the wider Pacific region. Climate change almost certainly guarantees that New Zealand will be the central host to future generations of Tokelauan young and their Elders.

The shame that being unable to care for Elders brings

The care of Elders, around which many Pacific families are often organised, has a major impact on the way in which some Pacific cultures perceive and value themselves.

Families often feel that they have honoured their relationships, and the love and contribution that their Elders have made to kin, village and community through taking on their care. The younger generation may gain a deep sense of worth and contentment and reciprocate by expressing their love through the quality of the care they give back to their Elders.

On the other hand this may not always be possible. Some younger kin may be able to live with not caring for their Elders, while for others it may become a source of shame.

...You know when she passed away I looked back over everything and I felt really good knowing that I had spent my time with her and I didn't have any second thoughts about taking her to a home...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

On the other hand this may not always be possible. Some younger kin may be able to live with not caring for their Elders, while for others it may become a source of shame. When families are unable, for whatever reason, to care for their Elders this may cause them a deep sense of shame as they may feel they have demonstrated a lack of love for their Elders which stigmatises and/or marginalises them from their kin and/or their cultural community. The context and the causes of the shame are complex.

...It's very hard, because sometimes to us, other people might think we don't love them if we have to put them into a home...it's very hard for us to put them in a home ...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Pacific cultures are collective in their orientation so each person is located within their own Aiga/Kaiga or kin groups and even land is organised to support the wellbeing of these Aiga/Kaiga kin groups and Elders. The care of Elders is mainly undertaken within these collective kin groups so that each member learns to be responsible for the care of one another with differentiated relationships with family Elders.

Some Elders need more intense care than others and the Samoan term *Matua tausí* denotes those Elders who require more intensive physical daily care. The collective organisation of Pacific kin/Aiga and Kaiga supports the care of those Elders who may require more intensive care as the carer roles are shared across households and across the generations. Even children will have their own roles for example giving comfort by massaging hands or the feet of their grandparents. In this context, when supported by agricultural abundance producing fresh seasonal produce, the care of Elders is able to be a more joyful experience for all of the carers and for the Elders concerned.

When Elders become *matua tausí* or physically dependent their families will do their best to take over their care. While that care maybe perceived as a burden on the families of Elders, there is a comparable burden of being perceived by others as lacking in love for their family Elders if the responsibility for care is given to 'strangers.'

You are born, as a baby your parents protect you, treat you well and you grow up to fulfil your life. When you grow older... you come back to the same position

*of needing to be protected and cared for...it's like a swapping of vulnerability ...
it's the responsibility of your children to look after you when you are vulnerable...
Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group*

The Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group recalled times when these Elder care duties were theirs as young people and it was remarkable how much joy it still gave them as Elders now.

I looked after one of my great grandmothers till she was 103...when I was a child my bed was beside hers and each morning I would make her a cup of tea together before I went to school...I loved looking after my parents, my grand parents and my great grandparents...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Consider then the numbers of Pacific Elders now reaching their 70s in New Zealand and the fact that they are living in more constrained circumstances causing financial and therefore familial stresses. Some families are forced to consider residential care for their Elders even when they worry about how they will be perceived by others. It is a difficult decision to reconcile because by their own values they have not fulfilled their duty and love for their Elders. In the longer term this may go on to affect the sense of wellbeing of the Elders as well as their own.

It's a source of shame to actually not look after your Elders ...

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui groups

The Samoan term *Tausi matua* is the term for the role of carer for Elders which attracts specific blessing when families carry out this role. When families are unable to *tausimatu* or care for their family Elders an opportunity is missed. Families miss the opportunity to develop their literacy in the detailed care of Elders. They miss the opportunity to learn about the physical care of Elders and they miss the chance to learn how to care for and protect their spiritual, emotional and psychological wellbeing. In the perspectives of some Pacific cultures missing this opportunity then means that families may weaken their own sense of peace, maturity of judgement and sense of security within their own spirituality.

My wife works for the Elder people, sometimes in the middle of the night the phone rings some of the ladies ask my wife; 'can you come?' We go there in the middle of the night at 2am thinking there is something wrong with their health, but no they are asking 'why don't my children come to see me?'

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

While many participants had lived their lives in order to prevent these kinds of experiences within their own families, they acknowledged that life in New Zealand was making the fulfilment of these cultural obligations increasingly difficult.

...People try really hard to take care of their Elders and sometimes for some families it is very difficult to do that ...some Tongan Elders are placed into Elder

homes we are starting to see that now in New Zealand...it is always very hard for families but we are starting see that now in the Tongan community too.

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

This same sense of reciprocation for care during times of vulnerability was shared by the Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group.

I don't want to take my vuvou to the old people's homes because my vuvou looked after me when I was small so it's our turn to look after them

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

These complex motivations and emotional drivers are the some of the compelling reasons for Pacific peoples choosing more often to care for their Elders within their own family. Nevertheless, without new and additional support for Pacific families the choice to care for and protect their Elders within their own context and households is increasingly being taken away with consequences on the cultural, spiritual, emotional and mental wellbeing of Elders and their families.

Safety of Elders

The discussion about safety raised a number of ways participant Elders perceived the issues of safety. The Elders spoke of what made them feel secure, physically safe, spiritually safe and emotionally safe. Their overall sense of safety was negatively impacted when Elders felt disrespected, patronised or otherwise treated poorly.

Physical safety

With increasing age the changing nature of Elders' bodies and strength influenced how some felt about their 'physical safety' because they were not as 'agile' as they used to be.

Your own home is where you feel the most secure... because it is a changing environment we have a security alarm and that helps us to feel safer. With age comes insecurity in my home because we are not as agile as we used to be

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group

The issue of physical safety was more of a concern for the women Elders although most felt safe in their homes or in public spaces and shopping malls.

We feel safe here in Porirua, Cannons Creek and Waitangirua, it's safe here ...

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

Despite feeling safe in most locations, especially in the homes that they had lived in for many years, Elders in each of the Fa'afaletui groups agreed that they needed to be attentive about their security and safety.

One of the good things is that we have family visiting at all sorts of times, our kids, grandchildren and other family and friends so it adds to my security and puts off bad people...

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group

Safety within their family relationships with their younger kin

For some Elders their family relationships were being influenced by cultural differences between themselves as Elders and their younger family members, particularly children and grandchildren. When Elders are being cared for by their families and there are two, or even three generations living together within the households challenges will inevitably arise. Elders sometimes found it harder to ask for their own needs to be met as they did not want, in their own perception, to cause any fuss.

The Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui related how Elders sometimes felt unsure of how to tell their children what they wanted or needed from them. Sometimes when this was the case their families noticed that their Elders seemed reticent and encouraged their Elders to talk over their wishes.

There was a time when I sat down with my dad and I said; " Tell me..." because we were getting to that stage where he was too scared to tell us what to do not like before. He said to me I want to see the kids live in peace and to love each other, they didn't want to hear any screaming ...they just wanted to be happy.

Tokelau men's Fa'afaletui group.

The Tokelauan men acknowledged that there are sometimes difficulties managing the relationships between the younger and older generations when two or three generations are trying to live together. Tokelauan Elders promoted their need for peace and greater relational harmony between the generations of family members in order to live well with their families.

Cook Island Elders raised the differences between the generations and the difficulties their younger kin had relating to them. Younger people had differing cultural values, norms and experiences, and were more accustomed than their Elders to local New Zealand cultural norms. In order for these Elders to feel higher levels of safety and power it was important for them to feel that they and other Elders were treated respectfully even when they disagreed with the behaviour of their younger kin.

I can see it among my cousins that they don't have the respect for their parents, I see it a lot, it's sad but I can't say anything...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Household demands on income within multigenerational households mean that younger kin must leave their Elders to go to work during the day. While Elders were very accommodating of the need for younger kin to work, it meant that they had to meet their own needs alone. This sometimes led to Elders feeling lonely and yearning for their Pacific home villages where they would have had the company of their extended family around them compared to the smaller, more isolating nuclear households of New Zealand.

Sometimes the children ...are too busy and too stressed and they have to leave the Elders at home by themselves because of other commitments ...times are

changing and kids and the Elders don't get along because its not like at home this is New Zealand ...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Sometimes there were conflicts between their children which affected the Elders' sense of emotional safety and relational harmony. This would occur, for example, when the Elders were living with one or more of their children. Their solution was to seek independent accommodation with one of their children of the same gender. This separation in space helped to restore the relationships between the Elder and the former host household.

I lived with my two kids, a son and my daughter and her husband in their house. My son and my daughter's husband never got along well so me and my son found our own flat...we are much happier now and we get on with my daughter much better.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

In their discussion of safety the Tongan Elder women and men found they felt safest most frequently among family and within their home households.

It feels safe to be at home with your kin, we feel much safer at home amongst our own children and our independence is at home not elsewhere

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Spiritual safety

Spirituality plays a major role in the wellbeing of many Pacific Elders.

Spirituality is important to keep well and happy, the older we get the more I can be comforted so I can keep going, the Bible is what I like to read often...it helps me stop feeling like I am growing old...it's good company and gives you energy

....

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Being able to take part in Church, it makes my day to go to Church

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

The most senior Tongan Elders are the ones who are looked to provide prayers and reflections for their families in the evenings when families gather.

The Taulekaleka Elders they are the ones that do the Lotu every night

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Among Cook Island men and women Elders church activities often formed their next most important relationships and activities. These either involved their families or other Elders when they wanted company.

I think the Church is the most valuable part of the lives of Elders ...the messages about what is most important; about our values ...these are taught through the Church.

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group.

Spirituality and its expressions was for many of the Elders an area where they enjoyed great freedom and the process to maintain their spiritual alertness. The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui found it a joy to participate and lead their extended families and their Church communities in spirituality and services.

It is a joy that brings me great satisfaction to be involved in church and service leadership which keeps us spiritually alert.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Dementia and Alzheimer's

The issues of protection and prevention of abuse are critical in the care of Elders whose physical and mental health is changing, and in particular when they begin to suffer from *Loto galogalo*, dementia or Alzheimer's. It is during these times Elders became the most vulnerable and so the highest standards of care and trust are needed.

Dementia or Alzheimer's, according to the Elders, warranted full time care either in residential or family based care. While Elders knew that New Zealand offered residential care for Elders suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's they felt that Elders could also be cared for in communal villages like those their home islands.

It's pretty rare to find Tongan Elders with serious dementia, we call it loto galogalo. I saw in my time when my friend was a boy when their family has their meals he used to eat his food quickly and then run to see his grandparents. Why? When he go to his grandparents they had everything... the best foods...and they would give everything to him ...everyone looked after the old people at home ...but here what can we do?

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

In the discussion of how best to care for growing numbers of Pacific Elders who would develop dementia and Alzheimer's the Tokelauan women pointed to their previous suggestion for culturally based residential centres. They saw that culturally based Elder care centres as the best care option for Pacific Elders with dementia and Alzheimer's.

When vulnerable Elders are made unsafe - Elder abuse

The sensitive issue of Elder abuse was raised by the Elders Fa'afaletui groups. Elders premised their discussion of Elder abuse with their view that the safest place for Elders was to live at home within their family especially when this living arrangement is supported by agencies, extended family, churches and communities. Elders acknowledged that problems with caring for Elders within their own kin based households can and do arise as a result of inadequate support for kin who are the care givers.

The Elders pointed out earlier that greater financial support for their home based care is needed and should be supported by the Government. When the stress of inadequate

financial support is added to insufficient physical care support then the risk of Elder abuse is heightened. Elders felt community based agencies are needed to provide relief when families need help.

The Tongan Elders Fa'afaletui pointed out that it is important that those who look after Elders should be visited periodically so families are not left by local health services to cope alone. It is when families and Elders feel cut off from external support and accountability that Elders can become more vulnerable to abuse and mental health issues.

The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui conceded that there can be difficulties for service workers who visit the Elders and their families to gauge accurately if abuse is happening or there is the risk of abuse. Elders suggested that part of the solution was to ensure that the agencies responsible for community public health had more Pacific staff in community health roles. If this was the case the Elders felt that the constraints caused by cultural shame could be minimised and safety for the Elders and their families could be improved through better face to face relationships with the agencies.

There might be some families that abuse their Elders it's really hard to know for sure because even when the professionals come from the agencies the Elders try to protect the family because of the fakama thing, the shame, so the support needs to come from the wider community to help because they know the language and culture and they stand by and help sort it out...not just leaving the family to sort it out.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui

When families are caring for their Elders at home the provision of culturally responsive community based support services is vital so families and their Elders are not left isolated.

The Elders discussed situations that they had heard of in the media and through their networks where Elders also experienced abuse and poor care standards while in residential homes and hospitals. In these instances the Elders saw these examples as similar to the situation among community families where abuse occurred because of the inadequate support and monitoring of the Elders and inadequate support for the carers. The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui pointed out the high priority placed on the care and protection of children and young people during their vulnerable years yet no such protection was afforded to the Elders in New Zealand society.

Elders are as vulnerable as children but there are no 'family group conferences' to help them sort out the abuse...

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui

This study has raised for the research team the present realities of the positioning of Elders in mainstream New Zealand society. The Elderly and Elders are *faamalolo* or 'retired' in the sense that their role and contributions are made smaller and they are then made less visible by being located away from the central activities of society. The bias towards younger people and their needs may make it more difficult to detect and

prevent abuse of Elders whose physical and mental health are weakening. They require protection that is just as vigorous as that in place for the protection of children.

The current suggestion for the establishment of a special commissioner to address the needs of Elder care, recently raised by Aged Concern, should gain wider support. Within that debate the unique aspects of Pacific Elders will need specific attention and further research.

Energy: Power and Electricity

When Fa'afaletui participants were asked to identify any areas that needed improvement several groups immediately identified the costs of energy. Energy is expensive for many New Zealanders, but in particular those on constrained incomes who are raising families in three generational households caring for Elders. The cost of ensuring Elders are warm through the winter months meant that energy is very expensive for families.

If you look at our home the power is very expensive but you need power for the old people to keep them warm ...you need to keep heaters on to enable them to stay well

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group.

Energy costs for Elders who lived independently were expensive. Some Elders spoke of struggling to pay energy costs on superannuation and finding energy unaffordable.

Heating is needed for more hours for longer but at the very time we need warmer houses it's unaffordable for me so I try to limit my use of the heater.

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group

Services

Government services

Elders often felt unsafe with professionals who could not speak their languages and who spoke to them in inappropriate ways.

Elders' involvement with government services, such as Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), was frequently experienced as disrespectful and disabling. This was compounded by feelings of shame when they were put in the position of insisting on their entitlements.. Elders said advocates were needed, especially when dealing with Work and Income and Housing New Zealand, in order to improve the standard of behaviour towards them, protect them from disrespectful or patronising behaviour and make sure they were given information and their rightful entitlements.

It would be good to have information sessions with WINZ so they can tell us on our own terms what our entitlements are ...they ask ambiguous questions ...and the way we are treated ...as though we are trying to get something you are not entitled to get...its very off putting ... We need our own advocates when we go to WINZ...

Local government services

Cook Island men were in agreement with the Tongan men's Fa'afaletui about getting their needs met within their local communities and locations. This motivated them to support and participate in local body matters, for example voting for local representatives for local governance bodies such as the Porirua City Council or District Health Boards. However, the Elder Cook Island men felt that their support had been forgotten and advocacy for their issues had been poor. This had left the Elders disappointed and less likely to contribute in future. They felt local government and councils needed to take greater heed of Elders and show greater inclusion in the future.

Elders felt it was important to have activities that brought them together in order to share information and to talk as Elders about their experiences within their own communities. The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group suggested that it would be helpful to have community gatherings to talk as Elders. They suggested that in order to facilitate such gatherings their own Tongan people needed a hall so that they can come together as Tongans – from the different island groups and across denominations. They felt that having a hall would enable them to have activities which would strengthen their unity and build up services and programmes for Tongan Elders.

"...if the Tongan community has a community hall/ centre, there are some activities they can have there ...the older people will go and enjoy their life and it will prolong their life..."

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Porirua and Lower Hutt cities are host to the largest populations of Tokelauans and their Elders outside of Tokelau. This presents an opportunity to invest in new ways for this population to make its own unique contribution to local communities – in both Tokelauan and mainstream communities.

The Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui identified a need for greater investment by local city councils in Elders programmes.

In New Zealand once you get old or become an Elder we tend to stay at home because of the lack of programmes...but we need more programmes, more development for our people to continue their lifestyle in New Zealand ...we need governmental encouragement for Elders.

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

Tokelauan women identified the need for local councils to find a local building where they could meet as Elders and conduct their own programmes.

Council could help with buildings and then someone could come and do some activities for Elders, we could talk in our own languages...play dominoes...

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

Transport

Public Transport

Gold Cards for seniors were considered to be a very good initiative by all of the Elders' Fa'afaletui. Gold Cards helped with public transport so Elders could shop for necessities as well as participate in community and civic events.

The Gold Card helps me to go out now...to go and get my groceries

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

My mother loves to have visits from other Elders, so they come and pick her up and then they go and have activities somewhere...

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

Some Tokelauan Elders had not worked in New Zealand and were not accustomed to using buses or trains and so the Gold Card had limited value for them. Tokelauan Fa'afaletui groups also had fewer Elders who were familiar with Gold Cards and their benefits than other Fa'afaletui groups.

Niuean Elders did make use of the Gold Card and were familiar with it. Some of the Elders found bus steps were sometimes too steep for them to navigate.

Sometimes the public buses ...I find the steps are too steep

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

Within the Tongan women's Fa'afaletui their preference was to provide Elders with private transport so they can get to church meetings, community gatherings, and visit cemeteries and family. Among Tongan Elder women and men there was limited use of the Gold Card and public transport generally.

The daily timeframes that Elders were able to use their Gold Cards was energetically discussed by the Samoan women's Fa'afaletui. They felt that the hours when gold Cards could be used should be extended. Some Elders lived some way from the major transport route so having to catch two buses to the train station and then travelling to their event in Wellington, for example, meant they often had to pay full fare on their return.

The discounted travel on the buses is a great saving. It's very easy to use ...but it doesn't allow us many hours to travel especially when you have to catch two buses to get to where you need to go and then timing the buses for your return...it doesn't leave much time in town so the time we can use the Gold Card needs to be expanded....

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group

Overall Elders were very positive and enthusiastic users of the Gold Cards.

Private Transport

The costs of petrol and car maintenance was identified by the Samoan men's *Fa'afaletui* as a significant constraint on their independence and participation as Elders in community programmes.

Petrol is getting too expensive now ... and fixing my car when something goes wrong costs more and more these days.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

The Cook Island women's *Fa'afaletui* reported that their grandchildren and young kin took the primary responsibility to transport Elders to the community, church or family events they wished or needed to attend.

Her grandchildren they take her where she wants to go or pay for her to go there and bring her back

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Active living

Elders were keen to see more programmes geared towards active living for their generations.

Tokelauan Elders liked the Pacific health exercise classes and the fact that they are provided with transport made it simpler for them to participate. However, with only one exercise session together once a week, they found that was not enough.

Health Pasifika has an exercise group and they pick us up. We have just one exercise group a week on Tuesdays but it's not enough. It would be great to have a Tokelauan group for our own Elders...

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group.

The Tokelauan women's *Fa'afaletui* thought it would be really helpful to have their own exercise group so they could exercise together, and to extend the programme to include activities around their roles as Elders.

Niuean Elders said physical activity was important for them. While exercising in the mornings was favoured, changes in their physical strength meant that exercise was not as frequent as it used to be. They explained that their legs were getting weaker so walking along flat scenic areas worked best for Elders living in central Wellington.

Oriental Bay is nice and flat out there so my husband will drop me off at Oriental Bay, and he will park the car and then walk towards me...but the legs are getting weaker and they give way sometimes.

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

Cook Island Elders felt that living actively and doing activities together made life more fun and helped them to stay healthier for longer. They pointed out how vital it was to have gatherings where fun and laughter were shared together as a means to staying healthy as Elders.

Being active ...very active that's how we stay healthy and live longer...

When we get together we are laughing and laughing together it helps to keep us healthy ...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

In general the men's Fa'afaletui groups all enjoyed being active and found local recreational services, for example the local swimming pool, were affordable for Elders. While there were also programmes for Elders which were free of charge, the men raised their concern about how few Elders were aware of what was available to them locally. Better targeting of information about active living initiatives for Pacific Elders and transport to venues is needed so that Elders are actually able to participate in activities designed for their benefit.

There are some free groups ...there is swimming ...the facilities are there but they don't know how to get there or get involved themselves ...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Another aspect of active living that Tongan Elders raised was an outcome of their participation in Elders' Fa'afaletui groups. Tongan Elders found their experience of coming together to discuss issues relevant specifically for their generation was both new and enjoyable. Tongan women Elders suggested that such gatherings would enhance their lives and build connections across Pacific groups of Elders in local communities.

It would be something to look forward to ...amongst the Tongans, Tokelauans, the Samoans ...maybe a get together once every three years and you know we celebrate life and share ideas of what we are doing and how we are being catered for or not ... it would make us feel young again...

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Tongan Elder men suggested that they too would like to have community gatherings to talk as Elders. As noted above the difficulty was that their community needed their own hall or gathering place so that they could gather as Tongan Elders, inclusive of all of the Tongan island groupings and religious denominations. The Elders considered a piece of land and a building could become a centre where Elders could carry out cultural transmission for example teaching the Tongan language. The Churches were also key locations for these activities to be supported and taught.

If the Tongan community had a community hall or centre, there are some activities that could be done that would attract older people...these activities like teaching young people will help us to enjoy life and prolong it

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui was of the view that activity or *gaioi* is very important to Elders for their wellbeing. The women Elders defined active living as being able to pay attention to their mental and physical health, as well as being attentive to their spiritual wellbeing.

Elders like to go to the Malls and drink tea and socialise. I keep busy with small jobs. I can walk along Jackson St and sometimes I will stop and have a cuppa en route – it's enjoyable and safe. Sometimes I walk with my grandchildren to the library...

I like to walk in the Malls in winter. I see a lot of men in the Malls – without wives...it's an ideal place to take advantage of the heating and walk and exercise in the Malls and saves on your heating...

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group

The women also suggested that while physical, recreational and community gatherings were appropriate for their generation, it was also vital to ensure they stayed up-to-date with current technologies such as the internet so they could correspond with their families internationally or pursue their own interests and research.

I use the computer and with patience you will get it regardless, take the time to learn it. I can email and you are not lonely.

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui

The Samoan women Elders wished to see greater consistency across local council initiatives for Pacific Elders across the Wellington region, as with SeniorNet for example. They also felt that there was poor communication with their age groups about programmes and initiatives like Senior Net where access to internet and coaching was available for Elders.

Clothing

The issue of clothing for Elders was discussed in the Fa'afaletui. Tokelauan Elder women found that the need for clothing that was suitable for New Zealand weather stretched their yearly clothing allowance to their limits. Most of the women felt that income support allowances for clothing were inadequate and needed to be increased.

Yes, we get access to benefits to help with clothing but it's not enough.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

The Niue Elders shared the views of the Tokelauan Elders and also found clothing targeted at their generation of women was unsuitable, expensive and often not formal enough. In addition Niue Elders women found it harder to find suits, jackets and accessories in styles and sizes that suited their tastes.

I look around for clothes I feel comfortable with ...gosh they don't make clothes to suit our age. These days clothes expose all those parts that in our day was covered, but shopping for clothes now and the sizes ...I am a nuisance looking for clothing I am still wearing my old clothes.

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

The Tongan men's Fa'afaletui commented that some men don't get access to warmer clothing that they need and some found it difficult to find affordable clothing that suited the weather. They also found the clothing that they needed culturally were not

available in mainstream shops so they either had it sent from Tonga or specially made. The men particularly noted how their wives and women in their families were more 'fussy' about clothing for Tongan community and special events.

I have seen especially women who are fussy with clothing, they are always trying to see someone who can sew something for them because it's too expensive to buy new things, so it's an ongoing requirement especially on special Sundays and special occasions.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Samoa men found the only problem they had with clothing was the fact that the New Zealand climate meant that they had to expand their wardrobes to include warmer New Zealand-style clothing.

Clothing for us is OK, but we can't wear our lavalava Samoa (Samoa style clothing) during winter.

Samoa men's Fa'afaletui group

Communications

As noted above Elders raised their need for continued training in technology such as the internet. Their biggest motivation for learning was to be able to email family who lived all over the world. This prevented them from feeling lonely.

Alongside the internet their most familiar and frequently used communication tool was still the telephone, which gave Elders instant access to their families in their Pacific homes. When Elders felt homesick they could call their families just to hear the news from home. Elders liked to participate and stay in touch with their families even though they were in New Zealand. Tokelauan women Elders raised the high costs of calling their family members in Tokelau.

We get homesick so we call home (to Tokelau) and see what they are doing. It's very expensive to call home – its \$2.00 a minute.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

The Elders highlight a common practice for many Pacific Peoples living in New Zealand. Pacific people must stay in regular contact with their families so they are up-to-date with family events, village responsibilities and lands and titles matters for example. Maintaining close contact is vital for Elders in New Zealand for maintaining their cultural, psychological and spiritual wellbeing.

Telecommunications that can be accessed quickly and that are affordable are vital when climate or natural disasters impact on Pacific nations in the region.

Employment for Elders

Pacific Elders wanted suitable and appropriate employment well into their 60s. They often felt that continuing to be engaged in paid employment was important to their overall sense of wellbeing, self-value and empowerment as financial contributors.

Keeping working helps to keep us well...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Elders' ability to maintain their financial independence through paid work plays a central role in their interdependent relationships with their younger kin.

I think that finances are a vital aspect of Elders' lives and for Elders not to rely primarily on the family...

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group.

Elders agreed that there were definite emotional and psychological advantages of being in paid work. It takes time and support for Elders to move to superannuation as their sole income after years of paid work and making a financial contribution to their families, churches and communities.

Samoan women Elders raised the negative impact supplementary income from paid work can have on their superannuation and/or other income support entitlements.

If you choose to work you lose many of the entitlements ...our superannuation gets reduced if you work. If we were able to keep our Elders' concessions AND work then we should be able to work without all the benefits of that being taken away

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group.

The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui participants included several Elders who were working well into their 60s and others who worked when they had the opportunity. However, there were Elder women whose ability to take up paid employment was limited by their consistent contribution to their younger kin through caring for their grandchildren.

We work if we can but a lot of us are looking after our grandchildren.

Samoan women's Fa'afaletui group.

Food Security

Samoan Elders felt that they generally had access to good food. They were nevertheless mindful of income constraints which meant they budgeted in order to buy Samoan foods they enjoy.

The Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group spoke of their ability to look after themselves by meeting their own food security needs as a means of keeping healthy and strong. At home their ability to grow their own food meant food security was never an issue. However, in New Zealand the question remains as to how many Elders may in fact be

experiencing a lack of security, given almost all foods must be purchased, including the foods they most enjoy.

I have the capability to look after myself, back in the islands – it's what you live for. There is no problem with that at all because if you are not working...you live by the land. Over there you will never be hungry if you are not working at all over there, you live by the land and that's all right...here it's very different.
Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui

Similarly, food security for Tokelauan Elders meanings was about access and affordability of the more familiar foods they can harvest in Tokelau. Elders felt that as they grow older they yearn for their own kinds of foods more frequently.

The Elders were thankful for their younger kin who were fishermen and distributed fish to them. This saved them money and also fulfilled their longing to eat freshly caught fish, which they felt was good for their health and wellbeing.

The foods we miss the most are breadfruit – if they have any at Cannon's Creek we all rush there and get it no matter what it costs! We miss the fish, the faisua (clams); crab...when we grow older we want our kind of foods more.

Palagi (European) foods are ok at summer time when it's warmer but it's very expensive.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group.

Health Care

Tokelauan Elder men reported that they found it difficult to visit doctors and dentists on their incomes. They felt that there needed to be greater subsidies for Elders, as they are more likely to be visiting doctors more frequently. They felt it was better to increase the subsidy so Elders can afford to go earlier to prevent illnesses escalating.

We should get access to healthcare we can afford and the costs...I think the government can do better than what they are doing right now, they need to subsidise a little bit more...

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

The Tokelauan women felt that their access to health providers "could be better" and needed improvement. It was interesting that Tokelauan Elders found the health care system so problematic given they have New Zealand citizenship on entry to New Zealand. Their access is not hampered or delayed in the same way that it may be for Tongan or Samoan people who may not have permanent residence. Clearly, the obstacle continues to be affordability.

Overall it's a huge problem. The costs to see doctors are very expensive – and medicines are expensive...

Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group

The women Elders also agreed that many of them liked to spend their income on their grandchildren and great grandchildren alongside their Kaiga or family gatherings. The women characteristically didn't think of themselves in relation to their health care. They said that their children paid for their doctor's bills and specialist's costs to make sure they were seen when they become unwell or if their health needed further investigation. The Elder women did however feel that they had the benefit of good access to health and medical care through Porirua hospital.

Elder Tongan women also found it difficult to pay for dental care and visiting the doctor. They struggled to meet medical and dental costs at the same time so they tended not to visit doctors or dentists until all of their own attempts to manage their conditions had failed. At such times they became very sick, sometimes requiring hospitalisation.

One daughter who cared for her mother at home found it difficult to get any dental assistance through local health providers and had been battling for months to get help to pay for a medical alarm for her mother to use in emergencies.

I went to see the Work and Income asking for help with getting my mother to a dentist but they don't help...I have been fighting for about 3 or 4 months to get them to pay for an alarm ...heaps of small things they could help with but if I put my mum in a home they will pay even more ...but they won't pay me the same as other people ...they say oh because you are an islander and we know your custom is you look after your mum.

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Income

The Tokelauan women in the discussion about what would help their families in terms of incomes were clear – they needed more money, especially those on benefit and those who take care of Elders. In their view inadequate income causes a lot of pressures on families who don't have enough money to cover food security, clothing and basic needs such as electricity and heating for Elders' housing.

Tongan Elders advised that their incomes were not keeping pace with their real costs of living and that some Elders felt that they 'just existed'. These Pacific Elders felt that without assets behind them their income is limited to superannuation and whatever their children can afford as supplementary contributions. They found their income was not keeping pace with the cost of living. Being superannuitants frequently created a barrier to their participation in their usual activities. Their mental health was impacted on when they felt pushed into 'just existing'. This could take away their usual sense of joy in fulfilling their roles as Elders within their families, communities and networks.

It would be nice to have a few other things and not just be stuck existing; we need a little bit more so that we can afford to go past just existing... we need to have a little bit more to plan say to go to the south island in six months time or something like that, or to go home every three years.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

In both Pacific and New Zealand contexts Elders do their best to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in the context of cash economies, constrained incomes, sometimes as widows or widowers. For the men specifically, in addition to financial constraints, physical, emotional, and spiritual constraints also provided barriers, although their ability to think and to articulate solutions to challenges sometimes countered this. Their memory of their experiences in their Pacific nations provided Elders with some helpful examples and reminders of how active their lives could still be.

You know if we were in Tonga there are some activities there for older people where they will go and enjoy their life and that will prolong their life ...but here we come back to money ...in Tonga it wouldn't be like that, they would go fishing they would move around, do some crops still ...between the 70s and 80s

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

In the New Zealand context Elders do experience some struggles to fulfil their responsibilities owing to their reduced income as they age. Some identified financial constraints as a cause of ill health and a stressful part of being Elders when they wanted to have enough money to be contributors and participants.

The source of some of our ill health is the stresses about all the things we need to be able to do, but that we don't have enough funds to do. We want to achieve wellbeing but without enough funds we cannot achieve anything...

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui spoke of having to face many constraints owing to becoming superannuitants. While they lived within these constraints they said that thinking and talking together while doing community programme, gave them back a sense of freedom.

I wanted to take part in programmes with others like me ...it gives me a sense of contentment or wellbeing and from this time together we gain health and strength for us Elders.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Support

Elders wanted support to make their contribution to the ongoing wellbeing of kin through the successful transmission of cultural heritage and language.

Elders are looked to for their wisdom, their experience and knowledge of life, so it is important for kin to have access to the wisdom of their Elders. Care shown to Elders helps to ensure they are able to carry out the transmission of heritage and language.

These complex motivations and emotional drivers are the some of the compelling reasons for Pacific peoples frequently choosing to care for their Elders in their own households. If there is inadequate economic support for Pacific families this choice to

care for and protect their Elders can be undermined. Insufficient support increases the stress on those who have taken on the challenge to care for Elders in their households.

When households take on the responsibility to care for their Elders it is important that they are supported as fully as possible. Elders suggested a culturally based community nursing group that could focus on Tongan Elders for example as a way to provide better support and to recognise and prevent Elder abuse.

There's a need for help ...that we should have something like for example for Tongan Elders a couple of Tongan nurses who could visit the Elders at their homes, come and check-up how they are doing...how the family are doing with their care and they talk in Tongan and only a Tongan can understand what the Elders are saying...I am sure they would love that ...

Our kids are preoccupied and it needs some structured in times to help Elders to make the teaching easier...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

The complexity of cultural transmission tasks for Elders could be made simpler through family and community structuring 'cultural transmission' times into family routines and community gatherings.

Information

Information about services and entitlements was an area of frustration for Elders. The Tongan and Samoan women found little consistency in the information they were given about resources and services relevant to Elders. One Elder told the story of her own situation and how she had managed to have her daughter paid to be her caregiver with a reliever for one day a week. Two Elders in the same Fa'afaletui were treated very differently by the same government agency. Information was not provided about entitlements until they complained. Families persevered when they heard how others had been helped and followed up using new information from their own networks.

Look they are treating people differently ...I had to complain, I went to my doctor and it was only then that I was told about what services I could have. Social welfare is not telling people evenly about the same systems...

They never helped at all with my mum who is now 87...we have to learn what you did and so we need help with that information

Tongan women's Fa'afaletui group

Tongan men suggested that all service providers for Elders needed to hold information clinics on entitlements for the different Pacific communities in their own language.

Cook Island Elders were concerned about the correct information about superannuation making it into their communities. Misinformation was created when different interpretations were floating around their community as a result of news, media reports and public discussion of possible changes to superannuation. Elder men asked if the

researchers could find out about the changes as they were anxious. Once Elders were assured that no changes were being made they suggested the need for information about intended policy changes and their impacts to be channelled through to Elders' communities in order to prevent unnecessary anxieties.

Arts and pleasures

Niuean Elders when asked about their satisfaction and opportunities to participation in the arts and recreational pleasures felt that they were adequately catered for and did enjoy access to the arts. On the other hand some Elders felt that they preferred to use the spare time to rest.

Yes it's adequate the time we get to enjoy the arts...sometimes there's no time to rest.

Niue women's Fa'afaletui group

Tokelauan men described their greatest pleasure in life as having their children visit them, especially those who lived away from them.

It is important that we have visits from our children, especially those ones that live far away from us.

Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group

Other pleasures Elders described included feeling embraced and cared for by their families. These elements brought a sense of wellbeing and contentment, which was enhanced when they saw their younger kin sharing positively with one another as a cooperative and supportive collective.

Tokelauan women enjoyed cultural activities like weaving, which is carried out in New Zealand. However, these weavers' groups need families to make the weaving sustainable by bringing the organic materials that weavers use from Tokelau. At present New Zealand families pay family members to send materials to New Zealand or for family members to bring with them to New Zealand. The Elder women wanted to keep weaving in order to keep their skills and to ensure that *'little ones see it being done.'*

In New Zealand we still have some weaving groups but they need the materials and people have to bring them in...we need materials to be in steady supply so Elders can keep their weaving skills up... and little ones see it being done.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui group

Samoan women and men they felt that they are well if they are contented or *Malie*. Participation in local programmes like the *'O le Malamalama'* programme at Taeaomanino in Porirua and/or active living programmes enabled Elders to improve their own wellbeing and contribute to the wellbeing of others. Elders felt that participation in both their familial and community decision making and activities helped them to achieve the state of life known as *Ola fiafia* - an abundant and contented life.

The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui said that they enjoyed the occasional opportunities to go to community events, galleries and movies with their peers or younger kin. They found this enriched their lives and made them more enjoyable.

Spirituality

Spirituality and its various expressions are central to the role of Elders as well as a core part of their own activities. Many Elders had the role of guiding younger family members in spirituality practices. Elders were often the connecting points between younger people and the churches. Elders taught and led family prayer services or *Lotu* and they often saw it as their role as Elders to transmit cultural values and practices around spirituality to their younger kin.

Our spirituality is a very strong part of our lives and it involves the whole household. Every day we do the rosary together.

Tokelauan women's Fa'afaletui focus group

Tokelauan women saw their role as one of teaching the practices of Tokelauan spirituality alongside Christian spirituality as central elements of their family wellbeing and success. Some of the Tokelauan Elders maintained the practice of prayers before dawn, for example at 3a.m. they would lead the saying of the Rosary every day with the whole household. Tokelauan women Elders found that attending Church services each Sunday was an important part of their expression of spirituality. Tokelauan Elder women conceded that it was easier to teach these practices to their grandchildren rather than their children.

The fact that the churches also played a role in facilitating their Tokelauan language and cultural programmes helped the men to pass on their spirituality, language and culture to younger people.

The church also plays a key role in supporting their spirituality of Tongan elder men. Churches were critical in sustaining family spirituality practices for Tongan Elder men and women. As discussed above Tongan Elders also lead their families in *Lotu* or prayers each day, as well as during times when there is a need to provide comfort and strength within their families. The Tongan women Elders also found that developing a close relationship with God through their spirituality provided them with a source of inspiration when they searched for solutions. Through their relationship with God they felt supported and less isolated at times of loneliness.

As Elders their close relationship with God is central to their ability to keep physically, mentally and spiritually strong.

Church ... it is vital to me and all of us I enjoy myself that makes my day, you know, that makes my day to come talk to them... you know it's a bit difficult to be on your own...

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Cook Island Elders also experienced belonging, comfort and companionship through their participation in their church communities. Through these community-based relationships Elders deepened their relationship with God. Spirituality plays a significant role in maintaining their overall wellbeing.

Cook Island women Mamas and Vouvou Elders enjoyed sharing and teaching their spirituality to their grandchildren. It also enabled them to pray for their grandchildren and their families each day, seeking God's help for them and their communities. Through close relationships with God, Elders gained agency and were empowered to make daily contributions to the spiritual protection of their younger kin and families 'at home'.

I encourage them to ask God to help them to go to school and back, we have to bring that into our hearts and teach them how to pray for our families. Once they go to school they have different lives but at home you encourage our children to know that prayer gives you strength and your family strength.

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

The ability to do this contributed to Elders' own sense of wellbeing and that of their younger kin, while teaching about making the rituals of gratitude part of daily patterns in New Zealand. It also proved children can learn these rituals in their own Pacific language at an early age if there is a consistent pattern.

Niuean Elders maintained their own connection and participation in their churches. However, Niue Elder women spoke of their sadness about the fall in the participation of their younger generations in activities that they felt were important for families and especially for their grandchildren as they are being raised in New Zealand.

While the Elders were concerned about their young people's non-participation they were comforted by the fact that they came back to their community and church when there was a loss or crisis in their lives and families.

I have seen quite a few of these young families when the parents were here, but since the parents have gone...you don't see their faces ...It's sad but they are not lost altogether ...they appear when they are in need.

Niue Elder women's Fa'afaletui group

Samoan Elder men's Fa'afaletui focus groups said spirituality was where they felt they enjoyed their greatest sense of freedom. They felt able to participate in their own ways, drawing on their language and culture which gave them a much greater sense of agency than in other areas of their lives in New Zealand.

Our spirituality, and in our relationship with God...this is where we are most free.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

Our bodies, spirits and hearts

Elders were asked about their bodies, spirits and hearts and what their views were on these matters as their bodies undergo changes with ageing. In some Fa'afaletui focus groups like the Samoan women's group this subject was greeted with much laughter signaling the crossing into an area of deeper sensitivity.

In New Zealand there is no respect, ...today I've got a boyfriend, tomorrow I've got a different boyfriend and the next day I say to my mum 'here's my boyfriend' and she says 'what happened to those other boys?'. There's no respect for yourself, your body...

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui group

Among many Pacific cultures the body is sacred and seen as 'tapu'. This is protected through specific boundaries between the genders. Children are taught these as a norm within the Pacific home island context. However, in New Zealand these norms become relaxed through enclosed and more urbanised housing environments and more casual societal approaches to bodies and sexuality.

For Cook Island women the questions around 'our bodies and ageing' opened a discussion and exploration of some of the ways in which women's bodies are collectively perceived and treated have changed over time. Cook Island women raised the difference in perception of the woman's body for example between what they were taught as children in the Pacific compared to mainstream New Zealand views.

At home girls were taught before they became women and they learned about how tapu their bodies were as well as how tapu their brother's bodies were. There was a very strict adherence at home but in New Zealand these boundaries have been relaxed a lot.

Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui focus group

Cook Island women Elders attributed many of these changes to the more liberal values in New Zealand which are in turn influencing their own family practices. The New Zealand style of a more casual approach to sexuality meant that Elder women found it more difficult to pass onto their children and grandchildren the sense of 'tapu' or sacredness of their bodies. Some women gave examples of how they had tried explaining to their children of different genders for example the boundaries of not sharing clothing between male and female siblings or restrictions about separate sleeping spaces. These were sometimes met with laughter by their families or caused conflicts and so some Elders soon gave up.

Nevertheless, women Elders' views on bodies and sexuality were in fact pointing to the need to make wise choices with partners as the whole family is affected through these partnerships particularly when there are children. From the Elders' perspective the 'body' of a young kin is not just an individual body. The choices that one makes about one's body, from the perspectives of Elders, directly impacts on the Aiga, Kaiga or family. Young people are taught and expected to exercise their choices with

thoughtfulness because their decisions determine their own additions to their Aiga and Kaiga genealogies and poor choices become a burden on the whole Aiga, Kaiga or family.

In the discussion of bodies, spirits and hearts Samoan women Elders saw this was deeply connected to mental health for Elder women. They suggested the need for a more expanded perspective by health professionals to improve mental health services for Pacific Elders.

Fa'amanuiaga or the blessings of our Elders

Fa'amanuiaga or blessings of our Elders is achieved when younger people have taken care of their needs or attended to Elders so that they feel included and cared for. In reciprocation for this care, it is said in many Polynesian cultures that younger people receive '*fa'amanuiaga*' or are blessed because of this care and nurturance that they give. Elders in each of the Fa'afaletui focus groups were invited to consider what they wanted to say to younger generations at this time and what kind of advice they wanted to give younger people from their perspective.

Tokelauan women Elders readily acknowledged their young people who participate in activities with them as Elders. They felt encouraged by the way they came to learn with the Elders during times when there were singing practices or discussions about culture. The interest of young people gave Elders hope that they had been able to transmit to younger generations the love of their language and their culture which Elders felt was vital to sustaining their Kaiga or families – both here in New Zealand and in Tokelau.

Elders also wanted to tell the young people that they had grown in their trust of the young Tokelauan people in New Zealand and their ability to care for them as well as they would be cared for in Tokelau. This was critical for Elders and their longer term sense of wellbeing and ability to stay well in New Zealand.

We know we will be cared for in New Zealand as well as in Tokelau.
Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group

Elder Tokelauan women particularly wanted to acknowledge their children and grandchildren striving to achieve in a New Zealand education system.

We are very proud of our grandchildren's education and their successes. This is very different to the earlier times so we are thankful for that.
Tokelau women's Fa'afaletui group

Tokelauan Elder men spoke about their faith, family, culture and language. The Elder men's messages or 'last words' to their young people were to give them encouragement to keep their spirituality strong, to remain and build unity as one family and not to neglect the Tokelauan culture or the language and above all keep the presence of God as central to their lives. The Elder men were specific about the cultural and spiritual elements that they felt would sustain and unify their Kaiga or families into the future.

*...Keep our faith, Keep on being family with each other and aloha tahi te tino,
Aua le faagaloina le aganuu, aua le faagaloina le gagana – Faamuamua le Atua.
Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group*

Elder men were also concerned that they wanted their descendants to create environments where family life outcomes would be more harmonious relationships, safety, peace and love for members.

*I want to see the kids live in peace and to love each other
Tokelauan men's Fa'afaletui group*

Tongan raised the need to speak the Tongan language in Tongan households. They were concerned that English language as the medium of education was becoming prioritised now which would make it harder for younger people to communicate and connect to and enjoy their relationships with their Elders.

First, speak the Tongan language in our homes...so they can congregate with Elders and they can understand one another. And second to enjoy their own language.

Tongan men's Fa'afaletui group

Cook Island Elders wanted the support of the churches to help them to teach younger people and Elders needed to lead their community to prioritise children. Elders were concerned because their grandchildren were going through such rapid changes in New Zealand. Elders wanted their Cook Island children prioritised within their own communities so that they could be strongly connected to Cook Island Elders who are a major support for their wellbeing into the future.

The message for the community is to teach the children first and to look after them because they live in times of rapid changes. The churches and community need to be leading this and teaching and encouraging the care and teaching of our children as our first priority.

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Samoan Elders pointed to the need for young people to nurture the presence and participation of Elders which attracts *fa'amanuia* or blessings towards them. The accumulated wisdom and experiences of Elders were that can be shared with younger people, families and communities.

Preparing for the next stage of the journey and preparing for death

Many of the Elders were comfortable talking over their thoughts about moving to the next stage of their journey and preparations for their eventual death. For some this was a subject that was a natural step as they had reached 70 years of age and had various chronic illnesses such as living with a heart condition. Several of the Elders groups provided narratives about how easy it was for conflicts to arise in families at the time

Elders passed away because the plans of partners and children of the deceased differed from the extended family or family leader's plans.

In order to avoid these sometimes deep conflicts at times where emotions are high most Elders felt it was best to begin to tell their families what their wishes were so that families and their leaders were clear. This was an area that many Elders felt had been very affected by practices in mainstream New Zealand and where sometimes cultural norms were distorted.

The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui agreed that it was very important to teach their families about what should be done in the event of their death. They gave several examples where the cultural protocols around the funeral of an untitled younger man had gone beyond the more usual protocols and how these events cause changes or distortions in practice for others who follow. The Elders agreed this was not often the case but everything should be in order to avoid the pressures and conflicts that arise when arrangements or wishes are not clarified and communicated before death.

We need to reconsider this and begin to teach our families what we want before our day arrives. We can see there are many benefits to talking with our families before anything happens.

Samoan men's Fa'afaletui group

In the Samoan Elder men's Fa'afaletui group clarifying their wishes was seen as a one of the gifts as Elders which they could give to their families well before their time. It would help those who would be leading the funeral processes deliver on what was wanted and agreed with the family. This helps to prevent conflicts in their families at a highly emotional time. Children and wives/husbands would also benefit from understanding who has primary decision making responsibilities at these times so that there is a more negotiated decision making process between the direct family and the extended families. This will also help to minimise misunderstandings and possible cost blow-outs.

The Cook Island Elder men's Fa'afaletui discussed the need to sort out what their wishes before they got sick. Some had learned the importance of this because they had become very ill at an earlier stage and so had to talk over their wishes with their children. Cook Island Elders raised the usefulness of communicating their wishes to all of their kin in order that their wishes are clear should they get very sick or die. This is also vital for the New Zealand health systems to understand as they may not understand that 'next of kin' may not necessarily be a marital partner but may be their eldest child.

"I was in the hospital and it's not the first time I have been in but it's the first time I was in for something serious... I was gone and all I knew was my older daughter was arguing with my younger daughter ...then they were talking to my oldest daughter... she said; "no, you people do what I say because when he wakes up we will talk then." This is one of our ways ... the eldest of the family decides and so my life was in my oldest daughters hands, she has got the last say."

Cook Island men's Fa'afaletui group

Pacific Elders need much more information about how to communicate their wishes about nursing care and preparation for death in the New Zealand legal and health systems. Examples include how to arrange Power of Attorney or to make administrative arrangements for those who may have no choice but to become resident within nursing hospitals. Families need to be at their most vigilant in their protection when Elders are hospitalised because of mental illness or ill health. Again, the definitions of who are defined as 'next of kin' can lead to conflict with administrators of residential care institutions or hospitals. While mainstream society may appoint next of kin according to mainstream norms, Pacific cultures have 'different ways' of enacting final responsibilities for Elders.

Elders may become vulnerable in these situations if they do not have family members actively overseeing their health care and medication issues, as well as expenditure of their income. Elders are particularly concerned about the ability of private aged care hospitals for example to become the most powerful agents for Pacific Elders, controlling medical care, medications and income. These roles need separation and must be openly accountable to families. These kinds of arrangements require a partnership with Elders family leaders in order to reduce any abuse of trust when Elders are institutionalised.

While Elders are able to live more independently they can choose to have their own wishes set out in a will. Alternatively they may give their own instructions to senior members of their family. In many Pacific families it is the family leaders, or Elder Matai who carry out final requests. They are also inevitably responsible for the final conclusion of the affairs of the deceased.

The growing proportion of Pacific Elders in the Pacific and national population makes it necessary to develop community support for Pacific Elders and their Aiga, Kaiga and kin so they receive better information about their options and can choose the best options with their Elders before they become too ill or frail to do so.

Discussion

The Fa'afaletui groups provided so much rich material that not all of it has been recorded in previous chapters. The most important points have been included in the discussion for completeness.

The complexities of this research

This research on Pacific perspectives on ageing in New Zealand involved a number of complexities. The first is 'age' and 'ageing' in Aotearoa New Zealand is mono-culturally defined, and Pacific perspectives on age, the aged, and the process of ageing are absent from the literature. Secondly, despite information being available on key aspects of Pacific societies such as the way they are organised, decisions made, and responsibilities assigned, as well as material on the ties, benefits and obligations of kinship (Tupuola 1993, Efi 1994, McPherson et al 2001, Tamasese et al 2005, Hau'ofa, 2008.), the knowledge about the process of age and ageing that is held by Pacific cultural groups has in the main, not been committed to written text by Pacific scholars.

The struggle to rethink and talk about age, ageing, and the aged, from a Pacific perspective that is relational, spiritual, connected to ancestors and to future generations and further connected to land, and to the waters is an onerous task in the face of primarily mono-cultural definitions, policy settings, and service delivery.

This research begins the process of gathering and documenting the rich Pacific concepts, beliefs and values around the issues of Elders, Eldership, age and ageing.

In addition, this research is unique in that it attempts to document the Pacific concepts and issues that impact on the lives of the present generation of Pacific Elders: the very generation that first hosted Pacific migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is the generation which built Pacific communities, Pacific places of belonging and Pacific churches. It is the generation which established the teaching of Pacific languages in universities and secondary schools, and set up Pacific radio stations. It is the generation which worked up to three jobs in order to raise families, establish communities, and increase the wealth of families and communities in the Pacific.

The findings of this research expose at a profound level the cultures, spirituality, thinking, resiliencies and the challenges of Pacific Elders.

Mau Autu O Lenei Sailiga - Key Findings

The complexity of clarifying Pacific conceptual frames on Pacific age and ageing is further compounded when research questions are based on a secular perspective that ignores issues to do with spirituality or transcendence. Furthermore, they are usually premised on the belief of the Self as individuated with a separation between the body and soul. This is one of the key findings of this research. For example, the secular explanations implied in most social science literature diminish the status of spirituality in age and ageing to simply an element of wellbeing, rather than the overall constituent

underpinning of the Self in relationship, age, wellbeing, the aged, ageing and even death.

Further, the New Zealand mainstream cultural view of the self as individuated stands in contrast to the Pacific views of the self as a total being who exists in relationship to other people. This being derives its meaning, wholeness and sacredness from its place of belonging, its family, genealogy, language, culture and the environment. These views of the self underpin Pacific concepts of Elders, Eldership and the process of ageing.

In addition, the view of time as linear and chronological with its emphasis on the present diminishes the primacy of Elders and Eldership as the optimal life stage. The research findings demonstrate that in the area of age and ageing, Pacific People's epistemology and ontology held in their cultural knowledge provides a rich basis for policies and the development of future services for Pacific Elders.

The issues that the Fa'afaletui groups raised in relation to the socio-economic context and constraints which Pacific Elders face point to the urgent need for consideration of broader social and economic factors for Pacific Peoples when addressing Pacific Elders, Eldership, age and ageing.

Key findings are organised into the following sections:

- Mataupu Taua - key concerns
- Talitonuga fa'a le Pasifika - Pacific concepts
- O le soifua aogā - Pacific Elders and their contributions
- Fa'amalosi au i Aiga - Strengthening Pacific families
- Lu'itau o le soifua - challenges and constraints that Pacific Elders face
- Soifua fiafia - Living life as Elders

Mataupu Taua - Key Concerns

Itu fa'aleagaga o le soifua - Spirituality and the values of respect, reverence and sacredness

This is one of the critical findings of this research. For Pacific Fa'afaletui groups, spirituality is not just an element of age or the ageing process. It is not equivalent to such elements as housing, electricity and power, information and transport. This is not to say that these elements are not critical to the lives of the Elders or the ageing process. Rather, it is to state the unique and vital constituent role that spirituality has in the conception of the self with all its relationships. This self is constituted of both the body and the soul or the spirit. These are not separated from each other. Because of its pivotal role in the conception of the self, spirituality cannot be separated from age or the ageing process. Viewed from this perspective, spirituality is the key constituent force in the whole life process.

Moreover, spirituality is the base from which values such as sacredness, reverence, and respect emanate. These are the very values that safeguard and protect Elders, Eldership and the ageing process

Further, the marginalising of spirituality in political discourse, policy, research and service planning and delivery was seen as mono-cultural. The Pacific Fa'afaletui groups considered the imposition of such thinking on Pacific peoples cultures contributed directly to the fracturing of Pacific families, communities and cultures leaving the aged and the ageing process devoid of meaning and the supports that they require.

Linear Time, Elders and Ageing in New Zealand

Another set of complications arise out of the New Zealand mainstream view that time is linear and chronological, the past remains the past, and past, present and future can be viewed in their singularity rather than their connectivity. The importance that is placed on the present disconnected from the past enables the focus to be on the present 'productive' generation rather than generations which have gone before or generations that are still to arrive. With this view of time the old and the aged take second place to the 'productive' present generation.

This stands in contrast to the Pacific view of time as being relational and cyclical. From this perspective time is continuous and there is no present without the originating past. Age, ageing and the aged are not part of a past that has become unproductive, rather they are part of the continuity into the future and because they are an earlier generation they are accorded a special place as carriers of prior knowledge.

Eldership, the aged and ageing as political constructs

The Samoan women's Fa'afaletui cautioned that 'the aged' and 'the elderly' are political and/or bureaucratic constructs that are age bound and ascribe certain attributes which constrain them as Elders from living life fully. In their view, prevailing concepts based on 'age' were limiting to them and did not take into account their own realities as they continued to participate and make their contribution within their families, churches and communities. For the Fa'afaletui groups there was no sense of 'retirement' or minimising of their lives.

Talitonuga Fa'a Le Pasifika - Pacific Concepts

Pacific Concepts of age, ageing, Elders and Eldership

The task therefore to document Pacific views on age and ageing accurately was arduous. This research has used the terms 'Elders' and 'Eldership' to underline the respect Pacific People accord to the process of ageing and the aged. The Fa'afaletui groups from the various Pacific cultures view the process of ageing and the aged as imbued with spirituality. They identified this stage of life as the optimum, the prime or the principal stage of life for Pacific Peoples. Tokelauans used terms such as *Sinasina le Ao*, referring to those whose hair had whitened with age, *Kolomatua* or Elder women who looked after whole extended families or the *Toeaina* group who in their 60s often held leadership roles in their kaiga or families. *Hauatea* and or *Kaumatusa* signified that they were the village leaders and were respected above the other groups of village Elders.

The Tongan concepts included terms such as *Matua*, *Fafine matua*, or *tagata matua*. These are based on the notion of matured Elders. *Fafine eiki* are chiefly women. The Tongan male and female Fa'afaletui groups point to Elders and Eldership as being in the maximal or optimal stage of life when one has acquired knowledge, maturity of judgment and wisdom.

The Niuean Fa'afaletui spoke of terms such as *Matua* being the Elders of family and *Kau* meaning to respect. Their term then for Elders was *Matua kau* or Elders who must be respected. While there were other terms denoting leadership roles in village or church communities, *Matua kau* was the universal concept. This Fa'afaletui pointed to Elders and the process of Eldership as connected to leadership and underpinned by the notion, practices and rituals of respect.

The Cook Island Elder men and Elder women's Fa'afaletui used terms such as *Papa* as male Elders having more authority over family affairs, and the women Elders used *Mamas* or women Elders as having the balancing power within the domestic sphere. *Vouvou* is the term that is given to senior Elders of beyond grandparent and great grandparent age. *Tagata metua* are Elders who have reached 80 and beyond. They have the final say in familial and community matters. They also have authority and maturity to settle genealogy and land disputes. Eldership and the Elder are accorded authority, honour and respect. They are the final authority over genealogy and land conflicts. Genealogy and land are the two primal areas in Pacific societies.

The Samoan Elder men and Elder women's Fa'afaletui's term *Olomatua* defined the most mature and therefore protective defence post of the *Aiga* and *Toeaina* as the main term for Elder men. Elders, Eldership and the consequent leadership roles are also accorded to Matai. There was not a strict age categorisation identified by the Samoan Elders Fa'afaletui. Again, Eldership as perceived by the Samoan Elders Fa'afaletui is based on maturity of judgment and wisdom rather than being about age or physical ageing. The women's Fa'afaletui pointed to two specific groupings of Elders - *Matua tausī* as those who are not so physically active and are being cared for by their families, and *Olomatua* and *Toeaina* as physically active and mostly independent.

Eldership as the prime, principal or optimal life stage

The Pacific Fa'afaletui groups identified Eldership, the Elderly and the process of ageing as the most important stage of life. It is a prime stage that is associated with dignity, respect and optimal *Alofa*.

All the Fa'afaletui groups identified the varying stages of Eldership from the physically active, and mostly independent to the *Matua tausī* stage, the stage where Elders are physically inactive. These stages are accorded the same honour and respect. However, the later stage is recognised as associated with increasing physical vulnerability. The ideal in Pacific family and communal life is to be able to care and provide for members who are in this stage of life.

The focus is not only on Elders' ability or inability to be independent and self-determining. The focus and responsibility is also on families, communities and younger generations to provide care and services for the Elders.

Maturity and wisdom gained through life tests

Elders yearned to be able to use their life experience and maturity to continue to be contributing members of families and society. Positive wellbeing for Samoan male Elders is achieved through these processes being lived out within their families and communities.

The Samoan men's Fa'afaletui their arrival at a more harmonious life stage having been through 'life tests' like drinking, smoking and the risky behaviours of youth and early adulthood as a resource they had earned in maturity. They described going through these 'tests' as individuals and these experiences contributed to building their maturity and strengthened their focus on the collective health of their Aiga/kin groups. From this position of greater collective wellbeing the men felt that their Aiga/kin groups were better able to prioritise spiritual and other familial responsibilities.

The Elders' Tofiga, heritage and assigned roles

Elders are expected to have grown into maturity and wisdom through their lives so they are able to hold relational arrangements together while simultaneously bringing resolution to areas of tension and turmoil. From the Tokelauan and the Samoan Fa'afaletui this is the Elders' *Tofiga*. Tofiga in this context means heritage or assignation. Carrying out this role is demanding given the transitions in Pacific families and societies brought about by colonisation, migration, urbanisation and now globalisation. The fracturing of the extended Aiga structure, diminished incomes and mainstream privileging of nuclear families and individuality erodes the Elders' capacity to carry out their leadership and *Tofiga*.

O le Soifua Aogā - Pacific Elders' Contribution

Elders' contribution, including transmission of Pacific cultures

The key contribution that Fa'afaletui groups identified was the articulation and transmission of cultural knowledge, especially knowledge on bringing peace and harmony to disputes and conflicted relationships.

The survival of Pacific cultures into the future is a major concern of the Fa'afaletui groups. They saw their roles as including the transmission of Pacific cultures to the next generations as a way of ensuring the survival of Pacific cultures. They are concerned however, that the cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand does not lead younger generations towards openness and honouring of the cultural knowledge that the Elders saw as vital for the younger generations and their culture's survival. However, the Fa'afaletui groups also cited some examples that gave them confidence that the younger Pacific generations are hearing, participating in and picking up this cultural knowledge, for example, when young Tokelauan people join their atoll communities in choir activities.

The other key contribution that Elders make is leadership in extended family networks and in church, village and community groupings. As leaders Elders are called upon to guide and give comfort at times of crisis, for example to those who mourn.

Most importantly Elders in the Pacific context lead and provide resolution when there are areas of dispute. It is Elders within Pacific cultures who are the adjudicators on matters of local governance within villages or community groupings. Elders are the ones called upon to build or to repair collectivities, to protect land, genealogies and the seas. On matters of familial, local and national significance in both the Pacific and in New Zealand it is Elders who are referred to for leadership and it is they that should be more frequently included in policy and service delivery development and evaluation.

It is important to emphasise that these contributions are made under severe socio-economic constraints and duress due to limited incomes, mono-cultural secular assumptions, and diminishing social status and supports.

Fa'amalosi au I Aiga - Strengthening Pacific Aiga Contexts

Aiga, Kaiga, Magafaoa contexts of Eldership and Elders' contribution and responsibilities

As has been stated earlier, Pacific views of the self centre on the self as a total being comprising spiritual, mental and physical elements. This self exists not as an individual but in relationship to other people. The self or being has meaning only in relationship and derives its wholeness and sacredness from its place of belonging, its family, genealogy, language, land, environment and culture. This self in relationship is located in *Aiga, Kaiga, and Magafaoa*.

Aiga, Kaiga, Magafaoa and communal relational arrangements or *Aiga* networks are the contexts that give rise to both the honour and the dignity accorded to Elders and also their responsibilities and contributions. As was identified by Fa'afaletui in the earlier conceptual exploration, Elders in some Pacific cultures are the final decision makers on land and genealogical disputes. In New Zealand society Courts are the final arbiters of disputes. The responsibility to adjudicate well and to bring peace to extended families and communities rests with the Elders. The responsibilities of leadership, governance and the exercise of authority again rest with Elders.

This research found that in the midst of family and societal transitions as well as constrained incomes and increasing health challenges, Elders continued to provide leadership and bring peace to many families, churches and communities. Their resilience in the face of technological and migration challenges enabled this generation of Elders to set up sufficient communities for Pacific peoples and families.

This research also found that some Pacific Elders continue with their contribution to raising and caring for the next generation.

Removing burden and shame: increasing Aiga, Kaiga capacities to care for Elders

The sense of not wanting to be a burden on their families was prevalent and pointed to one Elder's choice to be put into a home so that her family can carry on with their lives. While Elders did not want to be a burden to their families, they did want to contribute to the lives of their families and their grandchildren.

Pacific Fa'afaletui felt that Elder care arrangements need to be financially supported by the Government so that family carers looking after Pacific Elders in their households were paid in the same way that staff in residential homes for the Elderly are paid for their services. Clearly, there were mental and spiritual wellbeing benefits for Elders when financial supports are appropriate. For example families with sufficient funds can continue to provide high quality care for their Elder members. The burden of shame of being unable to care for Elders weighs on some Pacific families.

The Pacific Fa'afaletui groups consistently identified that economic and housing constraints as well as the erosion of extended family supports disable many Pacific families from providing consistent high quality care for their Elders.

Sometimes families are forced to use residential homes for their Elders. This decision for Pacific families is usually made with difficulty and a sense of failure.

Lu'itau O Le Soifua - Challenges And Constraints

Pacific Elders continue to contribute to their families and communities, but they are facing major challenges and constraints.

Marginalisation of Pacific cultural norms, values and languages by mainstream culture

This study has found the present reality for Elders in mainstream society as both positive and negative. In New Zealand Elders are afforded some benefits. However, these are premised on individuality and secularism, and a view that time is linear.

In the New Zealand mainstream 'the elderly' and elders are often *faamalolo* or 'retired' at age 65 when they qualify for the superannuation pension. Their role and contribution to society is frequently seen to be peripheral. The relocation of 'the elderly' away from the central activities of society requires active protection as 'the elderly' and elders generally become less visible and their care is more frequently entrusted to others. This protection needs to be just as vigorous as those in place for the protection of children.

The Elders in a number of Fa'afaletui groups identified the highly challenging context that living in New Zealand created for their own cultural values and to their social status as Elders. Most of the Pacific Elders reported that living in the daily context of New Zealand had caused changes in the ways younger people interacted with and perceived them. The Cook Island women's Fa'afaletui identified mainstream New Zealand's lack of respect for older people. This erosion of the respect for Elders is now impacting on some young Cook Island people, as identified by the Cook Island Fa'afaletui who found that their grandchildren were sometimes reactive and disrespectful in ways that would never be acceptable in the Cook Islands.

The transmission of important cultural knowledge and heritage information was sometimes not being taken seriously by the younger generation. The metaphor to describe narrative teaching by Elders or "*feeding words*" to their *moko* (grandchildren) was at times misunderstood by the younger generation.

Ill health and loss of wellbeing result from the pressure on Elders to adjust to mainstream cultural norms while experiencing shifting family relationships. The links between socio-economic factors and ill health are increasingly accepted.

Further, there is the fracturing of the extended family and its support networks through the bias in policy and service delivery which privileges individuality, independence and nuclear family over the relational, interdependent and extended family arrangements of Pacific Peoples. This is a major challenge because Elders at their stage of life are made more vulnerable without the extended *Aiga* and its support networks with their collective commitment to economic, social cultural and spiritual resourcing.

Elders reported that contributing while living in their 'home islands' was possible because they were surrounded by *Aiga* or *Kaiga* and they had access to abundant food supplies. In New Zealand Elders were more restricted and their children would protect them by covering the cost of medication or food so Elders were able to discharge their spiritual or cultural obligations.

Income

Clearly the availability of superannuation for Pacific Elders during their years of vulnerability is positive. Nevertheless, the Fa'afaletui groups consistently identified the economic constraints that the Elders live under. In their view superannuation rates are not adequate for Pacific Elders to survive on and be able to function as Elders. It was explained that the Elders' sense of self-worth was seriously undermined when they could not fulfill their roles and responsibilities. As such their relational harmony is at risk and they live with continual worry and stress. The dual forces of economic constraint and consequential lowering of social status destabilises Elders' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Pacific Elders originate from populations skilled in subsistence economies with food security, active living and support in their Elder years. In the context of urban living and the cash economy of New Zealand, it is important to ensure that they, like other older New Zealanders, have sufficient income to participate in society. The links between adequate income, good quality food, appropriate accommodation and living a purposeful life as Elders is critical.

Employment for Elders

The drive for Pacific Elders for increased income in order to survive and to continue to contribute as well as not being a burden on their families leads many Pacific Elders to look for appropriate and well-resourced employment with adequate remuneration. The positive physical and psychological wellbeing resulting from such engagement prolongs meaningful lives.

Housing Elders

Housing for Pacific Elders was largely determined by what was able to be afforded by the Elders themselves or by their families. The added pressure of high accommodation costs and unsuitability of the types of accommodation available leads Elders to physical and mental duress and ill health. Living in constricted intergenerational households

where there are cultural and familial conflicts puts Elders at risk of physical, emotional, spiritual and mental ill-health.

One of the key accommodation needs of Elders from the research is for them to live in close proximity to their families. Government financial incentives to enable this to happen would benefit not only Elders but their families and communities. Independent spaces within an interdependent familial context would provide security and safety. This would also ensure Elders felt that they were still members of their families and it would allow the family to provide care and support without the stress of distance, costs and time.

The Fa'afaletui groups also pointed to the need for the Elderly to become visible, not only to their families but also to society. The present arrangement of large scale residential homes for the elderly removes them from the sight of society. The Pacific Fa'afaletui groups saw such arrangements as creating loneliness for Elders at their most vulnerable stage of life because they would be separated from their extended families.

Setting up specific Pacific Elders' villages

The Fa'afaletui focus groups considered setting up culturally specific villages for Elders would provide security and be a safe place for Elders to share knowledge, stories, a sense of belonging, speak their own language, enjoy their own familiar foods, and play *suiipi* (a card game), dominoes or weave.

The Fa'afaletui groups identified that growing old is a huge challenge in itself, but that growing old with unrelated and unfamiliar people turns this challenge into a lonely and often desperate experience.

Local government services and the creation of Pacific Elders' gathering places

Elders identified the need for local government services to be more responsive to Pacific Elders by making specific spaces available for Pacific Elder men and women to meet and participate in their own activities. This finding doesn't require new funding but the allocation of spaces for Pacific Elders to organise and host their own regular meetings, activities and gatherings.

This will have positive impact in local communities where Elders could make their own unique contribution, for example Tokelauan Elder women were keen to set up their own weaving group but needed a local building space where they could gather regularly. Local Government needs to increase its responsiveness to Pacific Elders and spaces for Elders to gather would be a step in the right direction.

Food Security

The link between adequate income and access to quality foods is pivotal to health and wellbeing. Food security in the Pacific nations was also linked to active living. In urban centres like Auckland and Wellington the ability to provide for one's own food security needs is now highly dependent on income. As Elders have consistently identified, their constrained incomes and the absence of appropriate support for households with Elder family members prevents Pacific Elders consistently accessing high quality foods and

more familiar foods for example Taro, banana and fish. Their health and wellbeing is compromised.

Health Care

This research points to wellness for Pacific Elders as a state of relational harmony where the personal elements of spiritual, mental and physical are in balance. Given the closeness of the spiritual, mental and physical nature of Pacific Elders any health policies and service provision that do not address the spiritual side is likely to fail.

This research found that constrained incomes, marginalisation of Pacific cultural norms, experienced at the personal level as loss of *mana* and respect and diminishment of social status, loss of relational harmony and self-worth, as well as restricted housing and care options result in physical, mental and relational ill health. The strong association between these socio-economic and cultural factors and ill health is increasingly accepted today.

Access to adequate and appropriate health care, doctors and dentists was limited for most Pacific Elders because of their incomes. The Pacific Fa'afaletui also identified that language barriers and mono-cultural assumptions and practices of health care professionals and health care service providers limit their access to good quality health care. The costs of medication and long surgical waiting lists mean that Pacific Elders remain ill for long periods.

The growing population of Pacific Elders experiencing dementia and Alzheimer's calls for urgent information and solutions that take into account Elders' own suggestions for improving their physical and spiritual safety.

Services

Professionals and officials caused Pacific Elders to feel unsafe when they did not use the Elders' own language. This was sometimes compounded by service providers behaving in ways that did not recognise the different status of Eldership so that Elders felt disrespected.

Services such as Work and Income or Housing New Zealand were identified as frequently using ways of communicating which Pacific Fa'afaletui groups strongly identified as '*disrespectful and disabling*' when Elders requested their entitlements. Based on their experience with these government services, the Pacific Fa'afaletui groups promoted the need for Pacific Elder advocates to be located with those services.

Energy: power and electricity

Energy costs were identified as one of the most expensive budget items for Elders on constrained incomes. Some Elders said energy costs were high whether they were living with family or living independently. However, all of the Elders were in agreement that while warmth during winter months is critical to their health, they often dealt with unaffordable energy costs by switching off heating and going to bed early - whether they were living independently or with their families.

Clothing

Elders in the Samoan and Niue Fa'afaletui groups found clothing suited to their needs was generally problematic on several fronts. Firstly, as the Samoan men reported the climate in New Zealand discourages Samoan and other Pacific men from wearing their *lava-lava* during the cooler seasons. Second, the need to have a broader range of clothing suited to New Zealand weather entailed higher costs and while clothing allowances that they were entitled to helped, they were not sufficient.

For the women, Niuean Elders voiced the need for more formal clothing suitable for their age groups. They found that clothing styles marketed as being for older women was at times unsuitable, expensive and too casual. This made it more difficult for Elders to meet their own standards of appropriate dress for their age and gender.

Communications

One of the more positive outcomes of globalisation is newer technologies for communication. Pacific Elders wanted training so that they could use the internet and email, skype, tele- and video- conferencing to improve their communication and connectivity across the vast distances between New Zealand and their home Pacific nations.

The role of Elders as leaders of extended family networks means that new globalised communications technologies can enhance a range of activities, for example to provide comfort to those at 'home' and for themselves when they yearned for 'home', to assert governance and to build and sustain collectivities and relationships. Senior Net for example was identified as a specific service which Pacific Elders felt required expansion and improvement in its responsiveness to the needs of Pacific Elders.

Elders' safety

Elders felt safe and secure most locations including malls and other public places.

Sometimes living in intergenerational households provided a challenge to cultural and spiritual safety when living with younger generations whose preferences were higher volumes and more intense activity. These intergenerational differences sometimes strained Elders' relationships and sense of safety as cultural differences between the older generation and the younger generations brought tensions and disputes.

Spiritual safety for the Elders is connected with boundaries, harmonious relationships and a clear sense of respect for their religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. Pacific Elders experienced a sense of spiritual, emotional and physical diminution when dealing with family, professionals and officials that neither spoke their language nor respected their values and beliefs.

The sensitivity around the issue of Elder abuse was raised by the Fa'afaletui groups. Their discussions around safety and the elimination of Elder abuse was premised on the belief that living with family was the best and safest option, especially when this living arrangement was supported by appropriate funding, service agencies, extended family and communities.

Transport

Gold Cards for senior citizens were considered by the Fa'afaletui to be an excellent initiative. However, as with community based activity programmes knowledge about these services is not widely available to Pacific Elders. Some Elders also found physical barriers like the steps on to public transport inhibitive.

Private transport was seen to be a preferred option for both individuals and groups of Pacific Elders because there is no time constraint on usage so Elders can attend their church meetings and/or family gatherings at the most appropriate times. Private transport was also preferred as Pacific Elders often lived away from major transport routes making the public transport option too complex.

Soifua Fiafia - Living In Eldership

Active living

Pacific Fa'afaletui groups said they usually maintained their levels of physical activity and also enjoyed being engaged in activities within their Aiga or Kaiga, with their peers and in church and cultural communities. Pacific Elders exercised as part of their daily patterns. Elders cited examples of organised walking in local areas '*on flat paths*', collective Tai Chi classes in their local community as well as swimming and dancing. Dance for Pacific Elder women was a joyful activity which they sometimes taught to others, including their grandchildren. Fa'afaletui groups also cited the way that caring for their grandchildren helps to keep them connected to the children as well as physically and spiritually active.

In leadership roles in their families and communities Elders were actively leading and participating in communal activities which they felt helped them to stay healthier for longer. This sense of active living is enhanced when gatherings are fun and laughter is shared.

The affordability of local swimming pools and free programmes for Elders did enabled many to continue to enjoy being active alongside other Elders. However, the Pacific Fa'afaletui consistently identified that information about local active living initiatives and services needed to be more widely available. The Fa'afaletui also agreed that transportation for Elders to the community based programmes would help to increase their participation.

Our Bodies, Spirits and Hearts

While Elders accepted the physical changes that ageing brought to their bodies, they pointed to the liberalisation between their generation and the younger generation regarding the physical and spiritual boundaries for protection of bodies. Elders found that the New Zealand mainstream cultural norms about bodies and sexuality had influenced some young people and it was harder to teach their own cultural concepts and practices of '*Tapu*' or sacredness in relation to the body.

From the Elders' perspectives the 'body' of a descendent belongs to the *Aiga, Kaiga or Magafaoa*. The choices young people make directly impact on the entire Aiga.

In the discussion of bodies, spirits and hearts the Elders also considered that their perspectives on these areas needed to be taken into account to expand current mental health approaches and services for Elders.

Pleasures

Elders said that their greatest pleasures are derived from the visits of their children and grandchildren who live away from them. Their pleasure also emanates from witnessing the younger generations become interested and engaged in learning about their cultures and heritage.

Elders acknowledged that they also gained a vital sense of fulfillment from being able to continue with their contribution to their families and communities. Pacific Elders said they are fulfilled when their roles and status as Elders are respected and they are acknowledged and remembered by their families at special times. This sense of holistic pleasure and fulfillment leads to the highest sense of harmony or *Malie* when all their relationships are harmonious and continuous.

Fa'amanuiaga - Blessings from Pacific Elders

In a Pacific context the Elders, in reciprocity for being cared for and served well by the younger generation, provide blessings. These blessings can become intergenerational. She or he that has served Elders well is sometimes reciprocated through words of gratitude, affirmation, acknowledgement and blessing. These are not perceived as just ordinary words, but as profound words of deeper meaning which maybe passed down to the receiver's children and their children's children. The Elders 'blessings', within a Pacific context, can create wellbeing, not only in the present, time but also into the future.

In this sense everyone in the community gains from caring for and servicing well the needs of Pacific Elders and the aged. This perspective from the Pacific Fa'afaletui is in fact a 'blessing' as it is a perspective which honours the role of those who care for and provide service to Elders. This unique perspective can inform and benefit New Zealand mainstream perspectives on ageing, policy and services for the aged.

Preparation for death

The high financial costs of funerals, burial and/or cremation for people on constrained incomes prevents Pacific Elders from facing death with confidence. Pacific Elders simply cannot afford to die. It is not feasible for Pacific Elders to face the costs of Funerals and burial/cremation alone or without the additional financial support of extended family contributions.

Elders need accessible and better information about their legal options in making preparations for death. Elders require support in making legal arrangements such as an Enduring Power of Attorney or a Will. They and their families also need the ability to hold aged care hospitals accountable to families so that abuses of trust were prevented when Elders became institutionalised. Preparing well for this stage of life was seen by Pacific Fa'afaletui to be a 'gift' to their families that can help to build harmony and unity if handled well.

Pacific perspectives on death and dying include the view that death is a journey to the next life stage. Pacific groups have their own cultural metaphors and names for the journey to and the places of the next life stage. Pacific rituals and practices on death and dying emanate from relational cultures and their subsistence economies. The need to rethink these cultural rituals in the context of the cash economy is critical for Pacific Elders and their Aiga to face death and dying with confidence.

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