

Grey Power Disappointed in the Budget

Media release

For immediate release

20/05/2022

Budget 2022 has been a disappointment for New Zealand's leading advocate for older people.

Although the Grey Power Federation is pleased to note that the Government is investing \$3.103 million over four years to continue implementing the Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua strategy's current action plan priorities to encourage digital inclusion, senior entrepreneurship, and shared housing and announced an increase in the dental health grant which has been overdue for many years, the Federation president Jan Pentecost said it was particularly disappointing that the cost-of-living package, announced in the budget, excluded vulnerable older people on national superannuation.

“This budget appears to have forgotten or chosen to exclude some of the most vulnerable in our society, even though the UN expert on the human rights of older people in her 2020 assessment has stated the basic New Zealand pension was very close to the poverty threshold with 60 percent of singles and 40 percent of couples with little or no additional income apart from their pension.

We know the Government increased superannuation by \$52 a fortnight for a single person and \$80 for a couple in April but that was a catchup, not an increase. And for numerous people national superannuation is all they have to meet the current rising rents and other cost-of-living crises. Many of these people assisted in the construction of underlying infrastructure and paid high taxes to help build the New Zealand of today and to leave them behind now in their declining years is unconscionable.

An important issue we had hoped to see mentioned in the budget was adequate reimbursement for home and community support and rest home carers. Grey Power knows very well that these workers provide an essential service that many older people and others rely on every day. Without adequate pay and conditions some of these carers will look for employment elsewhere and the likely outcome for their clients is an increase in ill health and even fatalities. We hope to hear that this has been addressed in the health expenditure detail.”

Pentecost said it was a sad tragedy that vulnerable seniors in their twilight years had been overlooked when it would have been relatively simple and cost effective to ensure those years were comfortable and affordable. This was not a budget where we could say older people matter too.

Ends