



***Community wellbeing of the older persons  
living in Feilding***

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***Research conducted for the Manawatu Community Trust***

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## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Background.....	5
Method.....	6
The Findings.....	7
Strengths and Suggestions.....	19
Participating groups .....	21
References .....	21

## Acknowledgements

This research project has provided me with an amazing opportunity to develop my skills, learn and understand the art of research. As a third year student the idea of conducting a research project with little knowledge was a daunting prospect, however with the support and guidance of Mary Ann Baskerville, the research proved to be informative, fun and exciting. Mary Ann shared her knowledge, expertise and encouragement throughout the research which was invaluable.

I would also like to thank the Manawatu Community Trust for allowing me to do my placement with them. The staff have been so welcoming and have involved me in different aspects of what the Trust does. I have met some fantastic tenants who have been open and honest and participated in the research.

Finally, I would like to thank the many groups and individuals in Feilding who spared their time to meet with me and discuss their stories, needs and goals. This research would not have been possible without your positive, encouraging input.

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of the research was to focus on the community wellbeing needs of the older persons living in Feilding. This encompassed trying to understand what brought people to Feilding, their living situation, their health needs, social needs and future planning. A questionnaire approach was taken for this research and was conducted in either a group setting, one to one or completed by the individual independently. The criteria for those being researched was that they needed to be over the age of 60, living in Feilding. The researcher found there was a lot of interest in the project. This suggests an active older population who were willing to participate and share their experiences.

The findings of this project will be presented to the Manawatu Community Trust Board of Trustees. A copy will be given to the Manawatu District Council as part of their annual planning process and the SINCOSS group for their consideration and further action. Copies will also be made available at The Manawatu Community Trust, on their website ([www.manawatucommunitytrust.nz](http://www.manawatucommunitytrust.nz)) and Feilding District Library.

*“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”*

*— George Bernard Shaw*

## Background

According to Statistics New Zealand (2013) the total population of Feilding sits at 16,000 of which, approximately 3,150 have identified as being over the age of 65 years old. This equates to a 17% proportion of the population in Feilding being over the age of 65. With this percentage in mind, it is important that we recognize this group of people by considering their needs, identifying key services (and gaps) and reasons as to why they have chosen to live in the Feilding district.

A number of research projects have been undertaken over the years in relation to the wellbeing and community development needs of those living in the Manawatu District. With these projects, key themes have repeatedly surfaced. Some of these themes are the lack of or little communication between the social services, accessibility issues, the need for a central place to collaborate and disseminate information and the need for greater community cohesion.

Thus, the aim of this research was not to reinvent the wheel but utilize the existing information to support the researcher to build on the data and focus on the community wellbeing needs of the older persons living in Feilding.



## Method

The research was to investigate the community wellbeing of the older persons living in Feilding. Thus the target group of the project were residents over the age of 60 who lived in Feilding. A total of seventy five people participated in the research and this was conducted in either a group setting or on a one to one basis. 70% of those interviewed were conducted face to face with the researcher. The remainder completed the interview questions on their own. Each participant was asked a total of nine questions. The participants were asked a mixture of open and closed questions so there was scope for narrative and for individuals to expand on their responses should they wish to.

Qualitative methods were utilized to collect the data for this research project. According to DeFranzo, the definition of qualitative research is:

Primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfil a given quota.

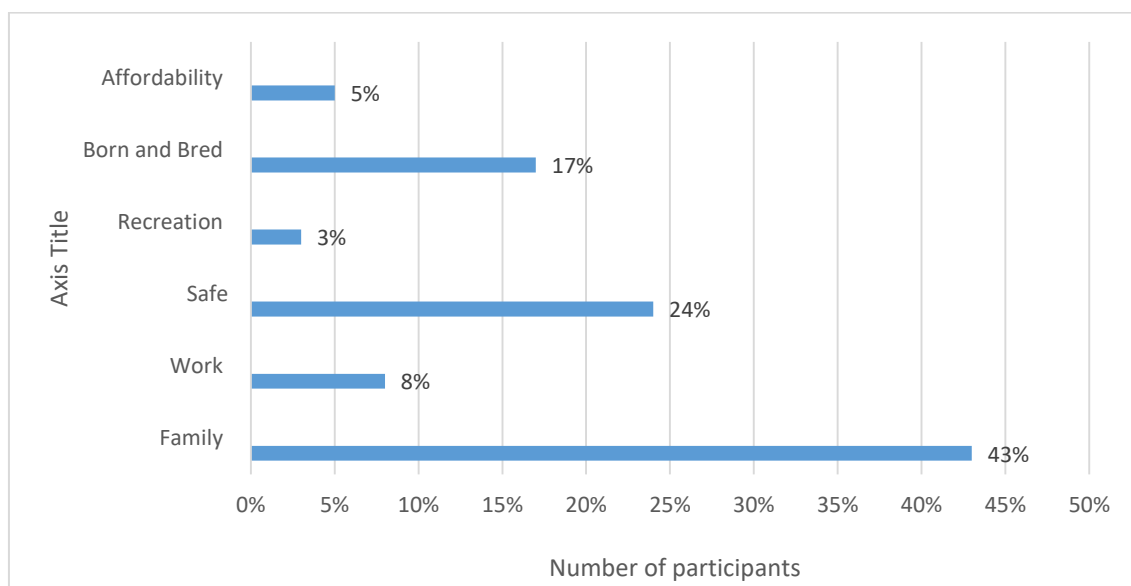
## Findings

As mentioned earlier, a series of nine questions were asked of the participants. The following represents the feedback, thoughts and feelings of the interviewees.

### 1. Why did participants decide to live in Feilding?

A large number of participants moved to Feilding due to existing family members living in the area. Having access to natural family support is important for the older person as it assists them to remain in their own home and live independently in the community.

A portion of those who moved to Feilding due to family mentioned they moved here with family at a young age and have remained living here since.



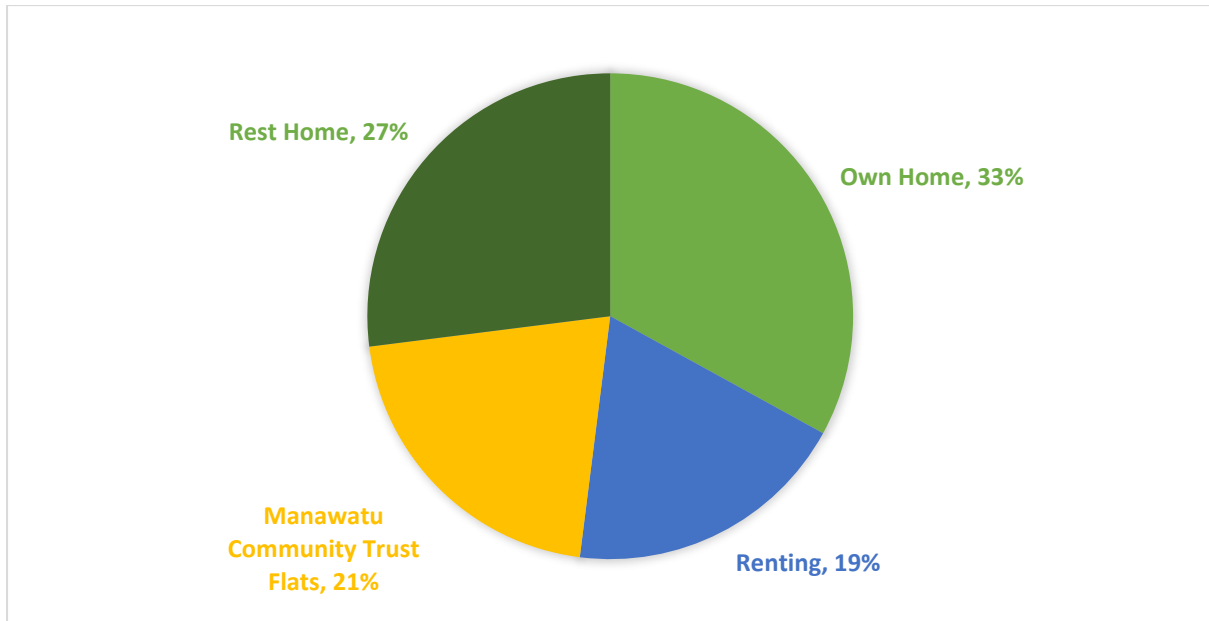
Some comments made by participants:

- *I have lived here my whole life. Schooled here, worked here and want to remain here.*
- *My family decided to move here.*
- *Wellington's rent went through the roof so the cost of affordable housing was a big incentive (to move to Feilding).*
- *I moved to Feilding three years ago because it's a smaller community and easier to get around.*
- *I moved here because of dad's work. I have stayed here and moved into a smaller home two years ago. It is safe here.*
- *My family still live here. It's a friendly and safe town.*
- *I moved here to be closer to family. It's safe here too.*

## 2. Do you live alone? What kind of housing do you live in?

Of the 75 people who participated in the research, 71% lived alone and 29% lived with others. A large proportion of those living with others were residents in Rest Homes.

Those who lived independently in Feilding were content to remain living in their own home or rental accommodation. Some mentioned that their goal is to downsize in the coming years or to move into an apartment/home within a retirement village.



Some comments made by participants:

- *We want to stay here for as long as possible. It has been our home for over 10 years.*
- *I like my small home. It's easy to keep clean and tidy.*
- *I like living in the Trust Flats. It's got a good community feel. Everyone gets along. I want to stay here for ever.*
- *The size of my home is suitable. I moved here because it's safer than Pahiatua.*
- *We moved into a Trust Flat because it was time for us to downsize. It is affordable and warm.*
- *I don't want to leave my home. I have lived in my family home all my life. Its rent free and I don't want to think about downsizing.*



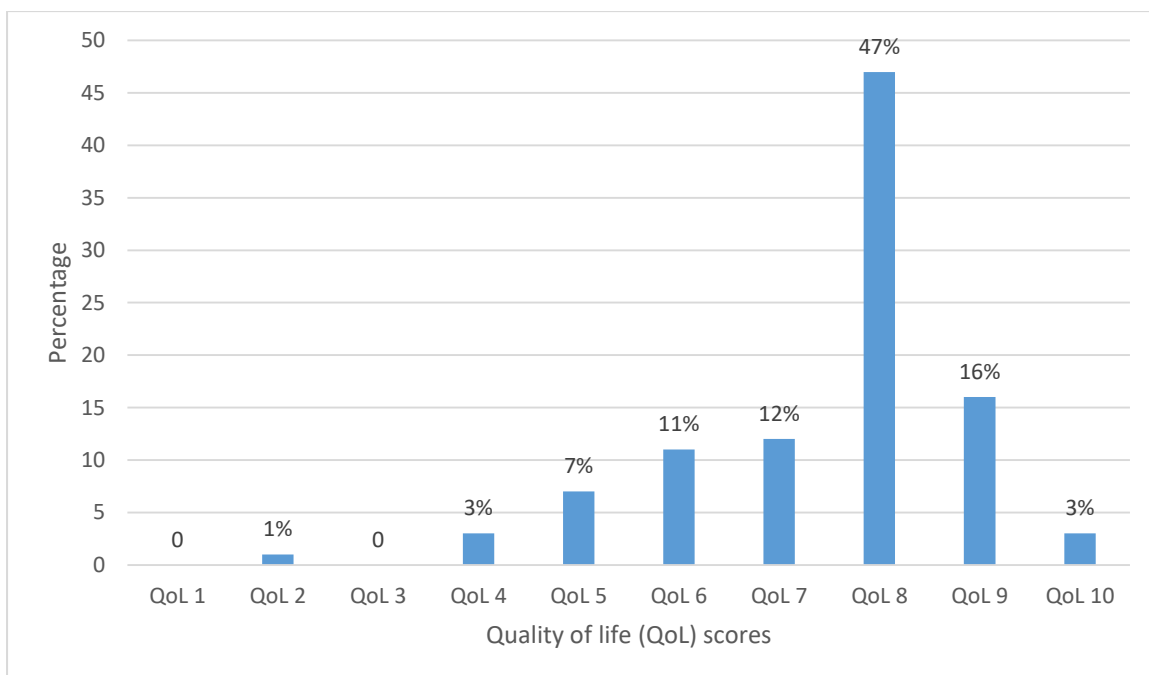
### 3. How would you rate your quality of life?

When the participants were asked to 'rate' their quality of life they were given a scale of one to ten. One being poor and ten being perfect. In relation to this research project, quality of life was associated with things such as one's standard of living, their health, emotional wellbeing, social wellbeing and financial independence. Some participants noted that their health status meant that a low score was given. Most participants noted that Feilding met their needs especially in terms of their standard of living, social and emotional wellbeing.

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand recommend a series of actions known as the Five ways to Wellbeing which they are:

1. Connecting with other people
2. Being physically active
3. Taking notice or being present
4. Learning new things
5. Giving – time, money, support or more

These five ways to wellbeing are a set of actions which can help improve the wellbeing of a person in their everyday life.



It is encouraging and heartening to see that nearly 70 % of participants rated their quality of life as an 8 or higher out of 10.

*Some comments made by participants:*

*I am so happy with my life in Feilding.*

*I have a lot of independence and love living on my own home. I love Feilding. It is friendly, safe and the people are helpful. I know my neighbours.*

*I rate my health a 2, but the rest is definitely a 9.*

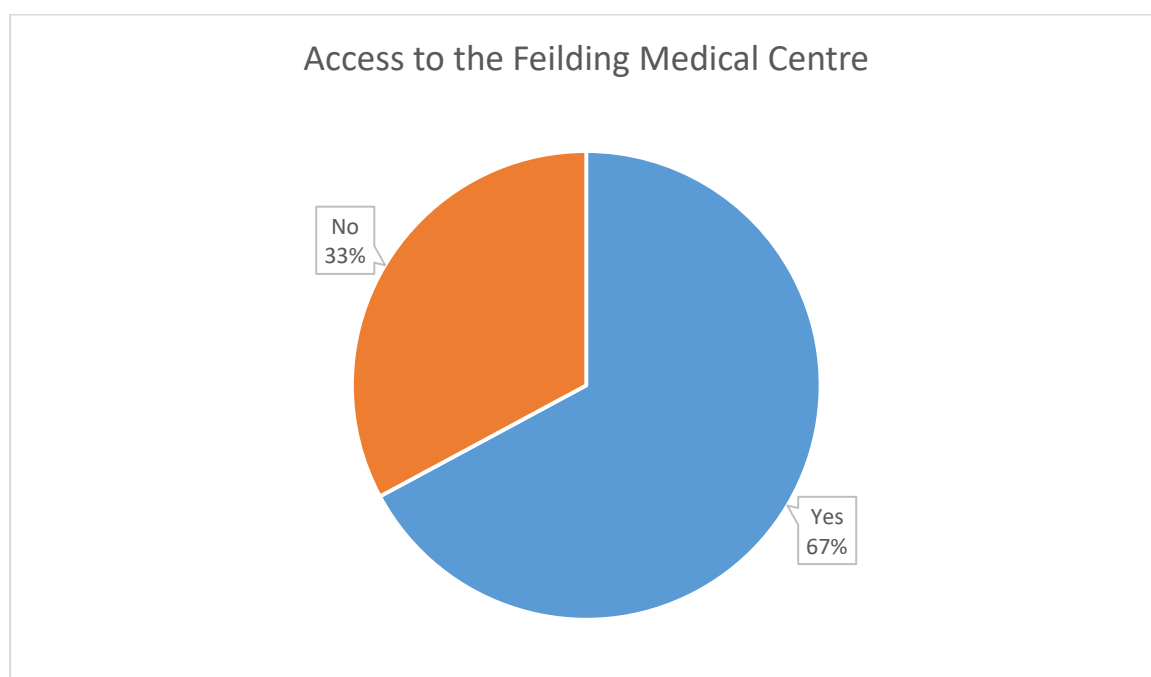
*With affordable housing, I can make ends meet.*

*It is important to be a part of 'something' and being able to choose an activity.*

#### 4. Have you accessed the Feilding Medical Centre?

There was a need to bring all primary health services together at one location. The goal was to ensure the long term sustainability of General Practitioners and other health professionals to meet the needs of those living in Feilding and surrounding districts. This resulted in The Manawatu Community Trust investing in building and owning the Feilding Health Care Centre on behalf of the community.

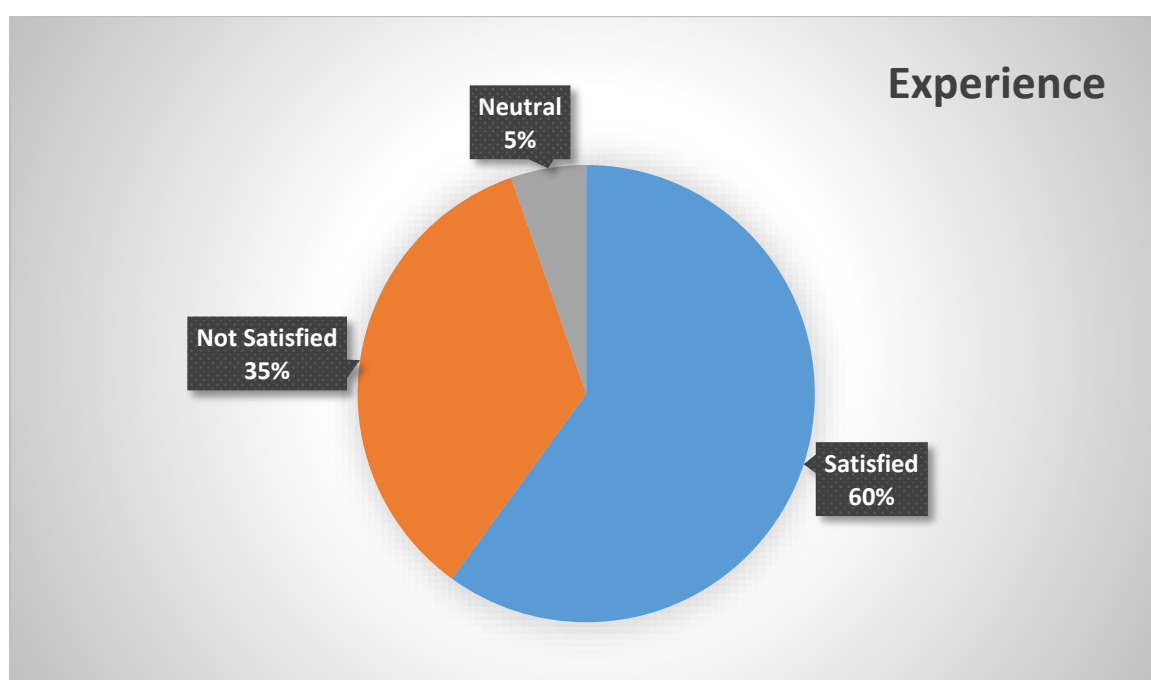
As the Manawatu Community Trust took the lead in creating the Feilding Medical Centre, there was interest in how many people accessed it and if they were satisfied with the service received.



Those who did not access Feilding Medical Centre had been with their General Practitioner long term and did not want to transfer to a local one. Most who had out of town General Practitioners were located in Palmerston North and Bulls.



In the next question, the researcher asked the participants if they were satisfied with the service they received from the Feilding Medical Centre.



Some comments made by participants:

*My experience is frustrating. I got assigned to a male doctor however I have since asked for a female doctor.*

*My appointment was made at a time I needed. Everyone was courteous.*

*We have a great GP. No problem with getting an appointment. For a small town we have a great service. Cannot fault the services.*

*Lack of GPs.*

*Getting too expensive.*

*The nurses do screening and this is helpful.*

*It's hard to get there with my level of mobility.*

*Parking spaces are too narrow so I park on the road.*

There were some recurring comments. In particular, participants found the location was too far out of the town centre and they had to rely on others to get to their appointments. Another recurring comment was in relation to the cost to see their General Practitioner and that it was too high so people were reluctant to see them due to this. Parking was also an issue. A number of individuals found the car spaces too narrow to get into and out of and the parking lot did not allow enough space to turn around. Most people interviewed preferred to park along the street.

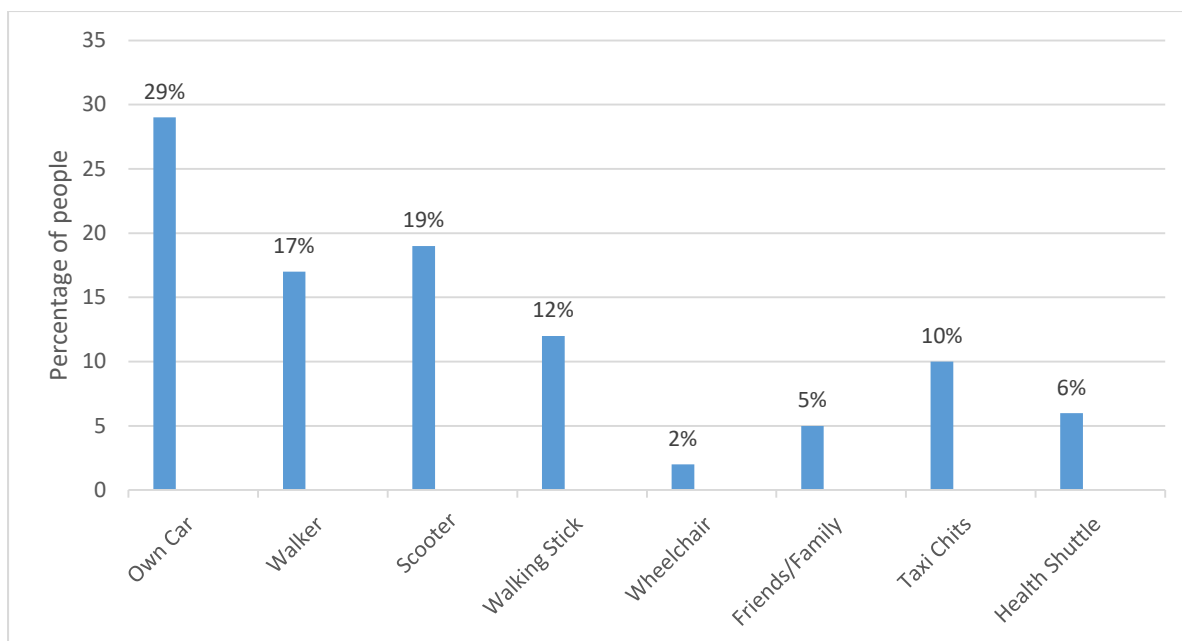
On the flip side, individuals interviewed commented on how lucky Feilding is to have such a great facility. They mentioned how warm, welcoming and friendly the front staff were. The service received from the nurses was also positive. They liked that they were able to talk to a nurse if they were unable to get an appointment with a General Practitioner.



## 5. Do you use any mobility aids?

Approximately 70% of people interviewed identified as being independent with mobility, however they did use a form of mobility aid which enabled them to maintain their independence. Those who were mobile (whilst using an aid) commented on the need to be mindful when walking in the town centre as the footpaths are undulating. While others shared the view that there needs to be zebra crossings rather than courtesy crossings as drivers do not tend to stop and allow people to cross.

Most people interviewed were still independent with mobilising within Feilding while others relied on another form of support to get out and about in Feilding. This is reflected in the following graph.



(Please note, some participants used more than one aid to mobilise).

It is interesting to note that when comparing the feedback given to the researcher, to that of the information collected by the Manawatu District Council (MDC) Annual planning (2015-2016), the level of dis-satisfaction in relation to the footpaths was also high. Approximately 45% of the Manawatu residents surveyed by the MDC noted that they were not satisfied with the footpaths in the town centre.



The same level of concern and dissatisfaction in relation to the footpaths was also highlighted in a study called 'Safety and Access Issues in Feilding' conducted in December 2000. These concerns have been repeatedly reported yet do not seem to be addressed.

## 6. What do you think Feilding needs in order to support its older population/lifestyle?

The researcher asked the participants if they thought Feilding met their needs in terms of the local businesses, the town layout, the parks and reserves and the services it has to offer. Most thought that Feilding was a great small town that supported its aging population well. The vast number of services, organisations and groups that support the older person was amazing and this will be discussed in greater detail further into the report. The majority also reported that the shops met their needs and shop keepers were friendly and helpful. The use of Kowhai and Timona parks was also a recurring comment, especially during the warmer drier months.



When asked what participants thought Feilding needed to better support its older population, they responded:

*Transportation within Feilding would be great, especially between social activities.*

*The library is too far out for me.*

*There is not enough support for people who live in their own home.*

*Not knowing what services, supports and groups are in Feilding.*

*There needs to be more people who can check on the older person to make sure they are ok.*

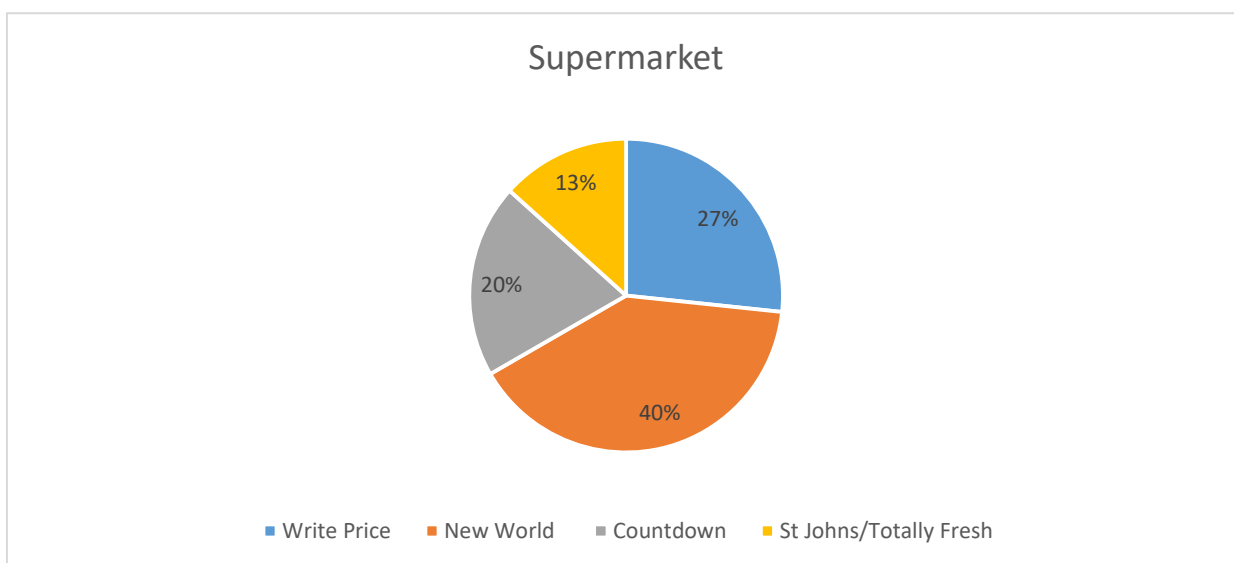
*A cycleway to Palmerston North. (For scooters!)*

## 7. Where would you normally do your grocery shopping?

With the imminent closure of Write Price and the relocation of New World, the researcher wanted to understand how the older person felt and if it would impact them.

When asked where they did their grocery shopping, 40% of participants shopped at New World. The reason for this was that it was small, the aisles were wider, the staff were friendly and helpful and it was well lit. Even though New World was more expensive than Write Price, they had more variety and fresher produce.

The graph below illustrates where the participants chose to shop:



26% of participants said that they **would be** impacted on the closure of Write Price and the reallocation of New World, however 74% of participants said that they **would not** be impacted. The majority of those interviewed said that they will look into the delivery option offered by Countdown and New World. They also mentioned that they will have to rely on family or friends more. Some will look into car-pooling and shopping at Pak N Save Palmerston North.

This situation shows the resilience of the older population in Feilding. They have already started to think about the resources they are able to access in terms of shopping elsewhere or getting to Countdown or the new New World.



## 8. What services/groups/organisations do you access in Feilding?

Feilding offers a diverse number of different services for the older population. The majority of the 75 people surveyed were active with one or more group. The majority also accessed support services like St Johns food bank, the hospital shuttle, meals on wheels and the Blind Foundation.

Home support and personal care were also frequently raised in discussions. Those who accessed Supportlinks services commented on the ability to remain in their own homes and to live independently in the community with this minimal but vital support.

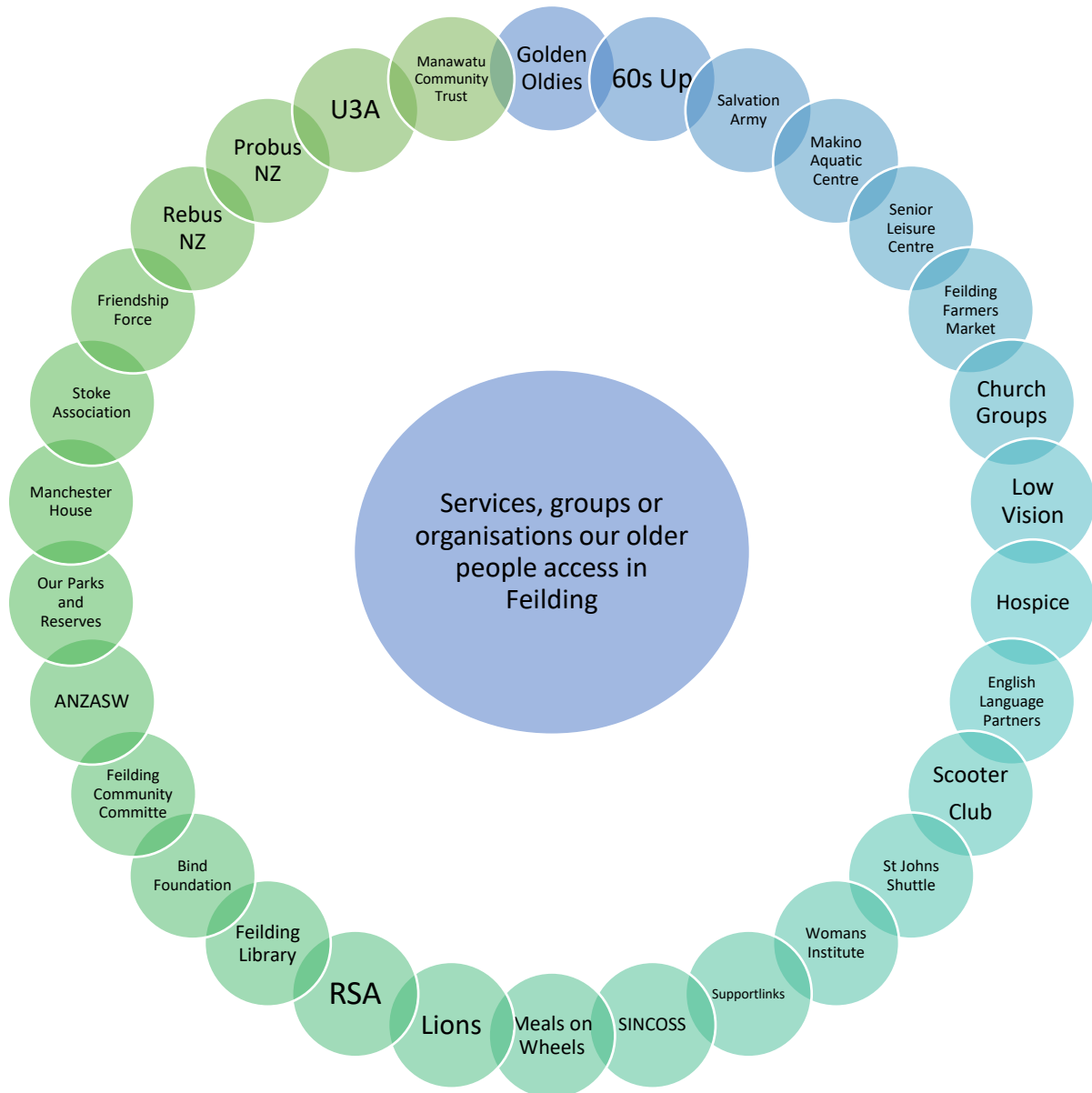
A large number of people accessed the Manchester Senior Leisure Centre. Upon visiting the centre, it was clear that the environment was very friendly, welcoming and warm. The feedback was that the Senior Leisure Centre provided friendship, activities and morning tea (for a small donation).

A small, but important number of people surveyed had recently moved to Feilding. They moved here due to the more affordable accommodation, for its safety and friendliness and to be closer to family. For them it was a matter of finding out what was available and going out of their comfort zone and joining in the groups/services. Some went to the new Feilding Information Centre and others talked to family members or neighbours.





The following chart represents some of the activities, clubs, organisations and services that participants belonged to or accessed:



## 9. Do you have any goals/plans?

When asked if participants had any goals or plans, the main goal identified was to remain living in their current home. With support from services such as Supportlinks, St Johns medical alarms and Meals on Wheels the aging population are able to remain living in their own home for longer. Upon discussion with a local rest home, it was noted that on average, the age of people entering rest homes was getting older. This particular rest home's median age was 85 years old.

The next predominant goal was to start thinking about downsizing as the property they were currently in was getting to difficult to maintain or manage due to its size.

The idea of downsizing to some was a daunting prospect. An interesting article in [stuff.co.nz](http://stuff.co.nz) discusses the pros and cons of downsizing, however the main theme was to start thinking about it when the individual is able bodied and not to leave it too late. The goal of downsizing is not only specific to Feilding, it appears to be nationwide according to the article.



Other goals and plans that participants commented on were:

- To visit family overseas
- To do some sort of voluntary work in Feilding
- To continue with hobbies and past times
- To continue driving
- To look at moving into a rest home apartment
- To look at getting a Will and Enduring Power of Attorney organized

## Strengths and Suggestions

On the whole the research had some very positive and promising feedback. For a small town Feilding does well to meet the needs of its aging population. The variety of groups, organisations and services in Feilding contributes towards improving to the community wellbeing of the older person. This is reflective in the quality of life scores the participants gave. Nearly 70% of participants interviewed rated their quality of life an 8 or higher out of 10.

Feilding is seen as an attractive place to retire as it boasts a safe and friendly town. Given the small number of people interviewed, a good percentage of those moved to Feilding specifically because they understood the town to be safe, friendly and affordable.

However whilst there are some evident strengths, there is always room for improvement. There were a few themes that were repeatedly appearing throughout the months of interviewing. One of the main issues was around the inability to safely mobilize in the town center. Participants commented on the uneven footpaths and deep gutters being hazardous, especially for those using walkers and walking sticks. An individual informed the researcher that she did not feel safe going into the town center unless she was with someone who was more able bodied. Participants also thought that the courtesy crossings needed to be turned into zebra crossings as their experience suggested that generally, drivers did not stop and give way to them.

A suggestion from a large number of individuals was the need for transport within Feilding to support the older person to get to social activities and the supermarket (particularly when New World relocates). It is widely known among the older population that St Johns provides a health shuttle service (for a donation) to the Feilding Medical Centre and Palmerston North Hospital for medical appointments in which they are very grateful. However, it appears the aging population would also benefit from a social shuttle service. This will enable the individual to remain connected and independent in the community.



Another theme raised was the high expense associate with seeing a General Practitioner at the Feilding Medical Centre. Most individuals interviewed stated that they would try to avoid seeing them as they simply could not afford the appointment. They found talking to the nurse at the 'screening' stage helpful and gave them peace of mind which usually resulted in the individual not requiring an appointment. If the Feilding Medical Centre was able to provide more nurses to conduct screening over the telephone this would put less pressure on the General Practitioners and enable the older person to be seen more promptly at a potentially lower cost.

Lastly, it can be suggested that there is a need to support the ageing population in Feilding with downsizing. This can be a daunting task with the prospect of the unknown. A service that can provide information as well as physical and emotional support could be of benefit. Moving into a smaller home allows the opportunity to declutter and prioritize what comes with the individual into their new home. Decisions like these can be difficult so to have someone support them in their journey of downsizing can make the experience less stressful.

*“A true community is not just about being geographically close to someone or part of the same social web network. It's about feeling connected and responsible for what happens. Humanity is our ultimate community, and everyone plays a crucial role”.*

*Yehuda Berg*

## Participating Groups and Individuals

The tenants of the Manawatu Community Trust

Manchester House - Senior Leisure Centre

The Golden Oldies

Baptist Church group

Ruawai Rest Home

SINCOSS

Feilding Scooter Club

Interested members of the Feilding Community

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