

# Senior Services



APRIL / MAY 2011



## A word from Merv

Welcome to our latest newsletter.

This is produced for non government organisations working in our seniors community.

In this newsletter you can read about:

- our Deputy Chief Executive changes
- the email campaign to SuperGold cardholders
- the online NZ Positive Ageing Strategy
- April's increase in NZ Super and Veteran's Pension
- simplifying the NZ Super application process
- our response to the Christchurch earthquake
- how to keep in touch with us.

Feel free to send us feedback by emailing us at: [seniors@msd.govt.nz](mailto:seniors@msd.govt.nz)

Regards,

Merv Dacre

General Manager, Senior Services.

## Senior Services Deputy Chief Executive changes

After three years at the helm of Senior Services, Hilary Reynolds has returned to the United Kingdom and Graeme Carruthers has been appointed to the role.



older people.

For the past three years Hilary has been at the forefront of leading change. Hilary was instrumental in establishing a seniors focused service within the Ministry of Social Development so we can better meet the needs of



Chief Information Officer and Deputy National Commissioner,

Graeme Carruthers has been appointed to the Deputy Chief Executive role.

Graeme has held several senior frontline and National Office roles within the Ministry including National Debt Manager, Deputy National Commissioner, for Work and Income.

### IF YOU WISH TO SUBMIT STORIES

Email: [seniors@msd.govt.nz](mailto:seniors@msd.govt.nz)

Post: Information and Reporting Team, Senior Services, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140



MINISTRY OF  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora*

## Email campaign to SuperGold cardholders



Last December, we emailed around 40,000 SuperGold cardholders to promote the SuperGold card website and the recently launched special offers page.

Increasingly SuperGold cardholders are utilising online and email channels.

The new special offers page is being trialled with one of our travel business partners Gitaway Vacations, who offer discounted holiday packages, with 60% off some cruises.

Gitaway Vacations was pleased with the response and have received a significant number of confirmed bookings for cruises, air travel and accommodation.

We are planning to promote the SuperGold special offers concept to our other business partners.

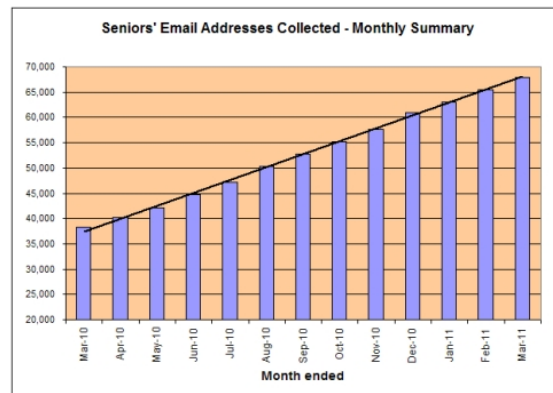
Another email highlighting the April rate changes, outlining useful information and reminding people about the special offers page has recently been sent.

**Special offers reminder:** To find out about SuperGold special offers clients can:

- visit SuperGold online at: [www.supergold.govt.nz](http://www.supergold.govt.nz)
- receive email updates on the latest offers by emailing their name, email address, client number and postal address to: [seniors@msd.govt.nz](mailto:seniors@msd.govt.nz)

## Seniors enthusiastic to receive email updates

Email is a simple and convenient way for seniors to contact us and for us to get relevant information to many of our clients, such as SuperGold card updates. We are focusing on collecting email addresses to make sure our future email communications reach as many of our seniors as possible. The graph below shows the continued growth in email addresses collected.



If you want to be emailed seniors-related information email your name, address, email address, client number (back of your SuperGold card) to: [seniors@msd.govt.nz](mailto:seniors@msd.govt.nz)

## NZ Positive Ageing Strategy

The Office for Senior Citizens has launched new web-based reporting for Positive Ageing. This reports on the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy and tells you about things that are happening in New Zealand to improve the wellbeing of older people. The website shows the 10 goals of the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy and outlines the positive ageing activities that central and local government are doing.

Over time, stories from community and voluntary agencies will be included. Statistics and indicators also give an overview of how we are doing for each goal. Online reporting means that information can be easily updated to ensure it remains current.

Read more: <http://positiveageing.msd.govt.nz>

## April increase in NZ Super and Veteran's Pension

The Annual General Adjustment ensures payments keep up with changes in the price of goods and services.

From 1 April 2011 there was a 3.75% increase to:

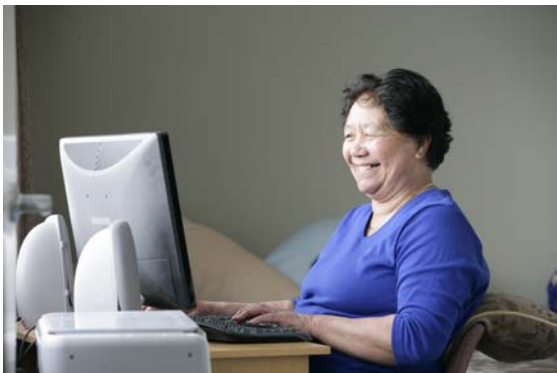
- rates of NZ Super and Veteran's Pension
- rates and thresholds for main benefits, Student Allowances, Student Loan Living Costs and the Foster Care Allowance
- rates and thresholds for some supplementary assistance
- thresholds for the Community Services Card.

The increase in these payments reflected the increase in the Consumer Price Index for the year to 31 December 2010.

On top of the flat adjustment for cost of living increases, NZ Super rates were further adjusted to bring them up to 66% of the net average wage.

On the same date Temporary GST Assistance and the increase to some allowances that were paid from 1 October 2010 until 31 March 2011, to help offset October's GST increase, stopped being paid.

The 1 April increase has superceded the Temporary GST payment.



## Simplifying NZ Super application process

Work on simplifying the application process for NZ Super is progressing well within Senior Services.

The NZ Super application form has been reviewed to improve the clarity and flow of questions, and to reduce the overall length.

A second round of testing with clients is complete and we expect the new form to be released in July 2011.

We have reviewed the application process for clients who transfer from a benefit to NZ Super. Previously these clients had to go through the same application process as a new client not already receiving a benefit.

A new, shortened application form has been developed for existing clients and is now being used.

The letter issued by Inland Revenue inviting people approaching 65 to apply for NZ Super has also been reviewed.

The focus of this review was to clarify the eligibility criteria, when to apply, and to encourage people to apply online.

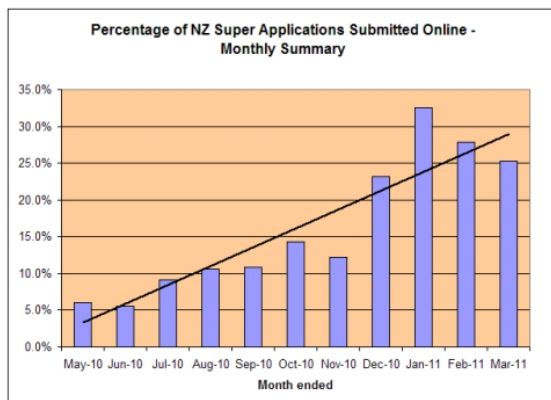
We started issuing the updated letter from December 2010 and since then we have seen a significant increase in the number of online applications.

## Apply for NZ Super

### Increasing numbers of seniors applying online for NZ Super

If you are turning 65 don't forget that you can apply online for NZ Super.

People are finding the online option very convenient, as shown in the graph below, with over 25 percent of NZ Super applications being submitted online in March 2011.



Submitting the application form online provides people with personalised information about what they may be able to get, what to do next and what supporting documents they need to provide. For some people this means they will not need to have an interview.

You can find the application form, and other seniors-related information, online at our website: [www.seniors.msd.govt.nz](http://www.seniors.msd.govt.nz)

### Senior Services response to Christchurch earthquake

Following the Christchurch earthquake Senior Services contacted around 19,000 people over the age of 65 to check that they were safe and to see if they required assistance. While most people contacted did not require assistance, feedback from people was that they appreciated our calls and the reassurance it gave them.

A specialised team made follow-up calls to people who did need extra assistance to assess their needs and worked through what was required, like organising transport and getting water to clients unable to get to the distribution points. Our staff continue to work closely with other government departments and non-government organisations.

### Reminders

#### Visit the Senior Services website



The website contains a wide range of information and if people have questions and need answers they can use the *Ask a Question* tool located on the site.

Visit our website: [www.seniors.msd.govt.nz](http://www.seniors.msd.govt.nz)

### Survey

We may be inviting you to take part in a short online survey asking for your views on ways to enhance and increase value for you from this newsletter. We hope that you will be able to participate. More information will be coming out about this.



## Alzheimer's disease and dementia – what is the difference?

*Submitted by Kimberley Ebbett, Alzheimers New Zealand*

Often when you hear the words 'Alzheimer's disease' they are accompanied by the word dementia.

It is easy to see why there is a common misconception that Alzheimer's disease and dementia mean the same thing.

Alzheimer's Disease is not a synonym for dementia. In fact, Alzheimer's disease is one of many forms of dementia.

So what is dementia?

Dementia can best be described as the umbrella under which various conditions that affect different parts of the brain fall.

Each form of dementia tends to have its own set of similar symptoms and behaviours, and occurs as a result of physical changes in the structure of the brain.

The reason Alzheimer's disease is often referred to as the over-arching term for dementia is because it is the most common form of dementia, accounting for around 70% of all cases.

Other forms of dementia include:

- vascular dementia
- dementia with lewy bodies

- Pick's disease (or frontal temporal dementia)
- alcohol-related dementia
- infection related dementia (Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease or AIDS-related cognitive impairment).

Dementia can also occur in people with Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and Down's syndrome.

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease meaning that over time more areas of the brain are damaged and people with the disease experience a gradual decline in their ability to remember, understand, communicate, reason and to accomplish normal daily tasks.

Many of these symptoms are also apparent in all forms of dementia, with each having a distinct pattern of symptoms and progression of disease.

Alzheimers New Zealand has 23 local organisations which provide support, education and information to people who are affected by dementia.

Please call 0800 004 001 or visit [www.alzheimers.org.nz](http://www.alzheimers.org.nz) for more information.