

Media release

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Older Kiwis are a highly valued labour force resource

The increasing number of older New Zealanders remaining in the workforce is providing an extremely valuable resource, the Retirement Commissioner, Diana Crossan, said today.

A Labour Department report* has found that the number of working Kiwis classed as 'older workers' (aged 50 - 64) has more than doubled between 1991 and 2005.

"It's great that the skills and experience of more than half a million older New Zealanders are being retained within the workforce," Ms Crossan said.

"For many in this age-group, the word 'retirement' is outdated. Some will want to stop work earlier, but others will want to keep working well into their 70s or older.

"The challenge for employers will be to keep these opportunities open for workers as they get older," she said.

Ms Crossan said the way organisations can do that is by recognising older workers' skills and knowledge, and offering them more flexible approaches to working. For some this will mean allowing them to work part-time so they can also meet other needs.

Research highlighted in *Opportunities and Risk: The Implications of Population Aging***, showed that encouraging people to work past 65 has positive benefits for the workplace because of older workers' depth of experience and loyalty.

They also pass on skills and knowledge to younger staff, and help make a workplace more stable.

"With New Zealand's post-65 age-group predicted to double by 2026, we need to make it easy for older New Zealanders to keep working. That will help plug the skills shortage and aid in supporting a significantly larger older population," she said.

"Life has changed a great deal over the past thirty years or so, including an increased age of eligibility for New Zealand Superannuation, no compulsory retirement, better health contributing to a longer working life, and a more flexible labour market.

All these factors add up to more older New Zealanders being retained in the workforce, which will greatly benefit the employer, the employee and New Zealand as a whole," Diana Crossan said.

MORE

The Retirement Commission's free and independent website, www.sorted.org.nz, has financial planning information for New Zealanders at all stages of life, including a 60plus section dedicated to older New Zealanders.

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*The report is titled "Older People in Work: Key Trends and Patterns 1991 – 2005", and is available on the Labour Department's website.

** *The Implications of Population Aging: Opportunities and Risk*., released in October 2006, was an initiative by the Ministry of Social Development, the Retirement Commission and other government agencies. The report was published by Victoria University's Institute of Policy Studies and is available on the Retirement Commission's website - http://www.retirement.org.nz/research_reports.html

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