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Call to Prioritise Age-Related Solutions in Private Rental Sector

AUCKLAND, 2 August 2024 –The Auckland Property Investors Association (APIA) is urging the private rental sector to urgently address the growing need for age-related modifications in rental properties in light of a new study by Te Ara Ahunga Ora Retirement Commission. The study reveals significant unpreparedness among New Zealand landlords for the increasing number of older tenants, predicting that over 600,000 New Zealanders aged 65 and over will be renting by 2048, a 100% increase from 2022 levels.

Supporting Positive Ageing in Rental Housing

APIA General Manager Sarina Gibbon highlights the importance of enabling older tenants to age in place. “Landlords overwhelmingly support tenants' ability to remain in their homes as they age. Being uprooted from your home at 65 is not just disruptive but incredibly damaging. Our members get that and want to see their tenants age in place. As the older tenant cohort grows, the economics of property modifications will become increasingly justifiable,” says Gibbon. “Landlords need to recognise that making properties accessible not only supports tenants but can also enhance the value and appeal of their rental portfolios.”

Urgent Need for Universal Design Modifications

The study found that while 74% of landlords believe it is important for ageing tenants to remain in a property as they age, only a small fraction have taken steps to modify their properties accordingly. Universal design principles, including step-free access, wider doorways, and accessible bathrooms, ensure that older tenants can live safely and comfortably in rental properties. “Modifications need not cost a lot and can make a tremendous amount of difference for the tenant's enjoyment, safety, and security,” Gibbon adds.

Economic and Practical Challenges

The study highlights that most modifications are currently funded by landlords themselves, with limited awareness or use of available government funding. APIA believes there could be better government-backed funding and increased awareness of these funding options to support landlords in making these necessary changes. This underscores the need for increased dialogue and collaboration between private and public sectors to develop sustainable solutions.

Resources and Support for Landlords

Landlords can access funding and support from several government and non-government organisations:

- **Ministry of Social Development:** Offers assistance for housing and vehicle modifications to help older tenants live safely at home. More information can be found [here](#).
- **Age Concern New Zealand:** Provides resources and guidance on how older adults can remain in their homes safely. Visit their website [here](#).
- **Senior Line:** Offers information and advice for older people to live independently in their own homes. More details are available [here](#).
- **Work and Income:** Provides various payments and services for seniors, including assistance for housing modifications. Learn more [here](#).

Action and Advocacy by APIA

In response to these findings, APIA is launching an awareness campaign that includes a panel discussion to educate landlords and property managers about the needs of older renters and how to implement win-win solutions for their rental properties. “Our goal is to create an environment where landlords feel supported and confident in making these necessary changes,” Gibbon explains.

APIA is also committed to working with all parties across the political spectrum on this issue. Acknowledging that housing can often be a politically divisive issue, Gibbon states, “Surely, on the matter of ageing, we can all come together in faithful service to those who came before us and nurtured us into who we are today.”

In the long term, APIA intends to collaborate with building and renovation companies to facilitate property modifications for its members. Additionally, APIA seeks to engage with government agencies to advocate for better policy settings that recognise landlords' efforts to support ageing tenants.

As New Zealand's population ages, the private rental sector must adapt to meet the needs of older tenants. APIA calls on all stakeholders to treat age-related solutions as a priority and to work together to ensure that older New Zealanders can live with dignity and security in their rental homes.

For media inquiries, please contact:

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About Auckland Property Investors Association (APIA)

The Auckland Property Investors Association (APIA) is a leading advocacy group representing the interests of property investors throughout Auckland. Committed to promoting education, advocacy, and networking opportunities, APIA actively shapes policies impacting the property investment landscape. APIA strives to cultivate a supportive environment for property investors while advocating for policies that uphold the rights and responsibilities of both landlords and tenants.