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Janferié Bryce-Chapman

While it takes a community to raise a child, it also takes a community to support an older person. This is what Janferié has come to realise in the 25 years she has been the executive officer of Age Concern North Shore/Awhina Kaumātua o te Raki Pae Whenua. In her time, she has contributed to the creation of programmes and educational resources for and by older people throughout New Zealand. The priorities of the organisation have been to respond to the needs of older people in the areas of nutrition, home safety, elder abuse, depression, suicide, social isolation and positive ageing.

Born and raised in the Wairarapa, Janferié is one of four children. Her family has deep roots in New Zealand. *We didn't have lots of photos around the walls, but there were photo albums with the ancestors in them. Mum would particularly talk to me, rather than the boys, and we would do our sharing times while we were shelling the peas.* Her unusual first name is Gaelic. *People would say, 'That's a nice name', so it always gave me a conversation starter. I thank my mother for that because it stopped me from being shy.*

Her mother belonged to various clubs, and was often on the committees of local community organisations. Janferié thinks that this is where she got her instinct for doing social service. She remembers visiting people in hospital with her mother, taking food parcels to older people, and visiting sick people in their homes. The Presbyterian Church was important for the family, and Janferié recalls that at home she absorbed the message of the 'golden rule' —*Do unto others as you would have them do to you*— something she saw her parents practising in their daily lives. *I guess*

what drives me is altruism; I want to make a difference. I'm driven by helping people and I guess that goes right back to my childhood, seeing my parents helping people. For me it is about making the world a better place.

After leaving school Janferié went to teachers' training college in Hamilton, although she did not really enjoy teaching once she graduated. She then got a job with British Petroleum (BP) in the public relations department, which meant travelling around the country visiting schools and explaining the process of oil exploration by BP. *I would talk about the petrochemical industry, where oil came from, and talk about prehistoric animals being squashed.* It was the late 1960s and her two years working for BP were really enjoyable. Having seen all of New Zealand, Janferié decided that she needed more adventure in her life, and had the itch to go travelling. She visited South America, the United States and England, where she worked in a number of part-time jobs before returning to New Zealand.



Janferié on 'Spring Stroll' event for seniors, circa 1990s

After her marriage in the early 1970s, Janferié and her husband, Philip, moved to Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands and opened a health food shop and delicatessen.

We became yoga teachers and did all that alternative lifestyle stuff. We were into health food, and I have been a vegetarian since those days. After six years, the couple sold their shop and moved to Christchurch. There they established a distribution warehouse, and ran the South Island operation for Red Seal natural health products.

In Kerikeri, Janferié became involved with the La Leche League after her children were born, and became interested in natural family planning. She thinks her first foray into public health was when she became an educator and tutor for natural family planning in Christchurch; work which she continued after the family moved to Auckland in 1983, settling in Birkenhead.

Janferié became the personal assistant for the national coordinator of Natural Family Planning. This job involved recruiting and monitoring the teachers, whilst also running night clinics and educational programmes in schools around fertility and family planning. The job made use of her teaching skills. The couple also had their own business making and selling cream cheese, so their lives were full and busy.

She and Philip got involved with the Northcote Birkenhead Rugby Club; Janferié as secretary for the juniors, and her husband as the manager of one of the teams. She was also a member of a veggie co-op in their street, as well as Playcentre.

In 1990, Janferié saw an advertisement for a part-time, 20-hours a week position as the executive officer for Age Concern North Shore. Before applying she visited Catherine McClintock, who was the executive officer for North Shore Community and Social Services (NSCSS) at the time. She asked her some questions about the organisation and what it did; Catherine made the work sound appealing.

Age Concern North Shore Inc./Awhina Kaumātua o te Raki Pae Whenua is a not-for-profit, charitable organisation that is one of a federation of 34 Age Concern councils within New Zealand. In the late 1980s, North Shore Council had elected a new committee. They set up a working party to look at the constitution, and the work of Age Concern North Shore, and recommended that an executive officer be appointed. They were looking to raise their profile in the community, and bring the organisation into the modern age. *They didn't even own a photocopier, and they didn't have a computer; they had an old typewriter. They needed modernising. It was explained to me at the interview that I needed to modernise it.* Janferié's mix of skills, which included business and public relations, and her knowledge of confidentiality in dealing with clients, made her an ideal candidate, and she was appointed.

Part-time work suited Janferié because she still had young children. However, within her first year at Age Concern North



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Shore, the opportunity arose to take on a service delivery contract for visiting older people in their homes and in supported living environments. The Accredited Visiting Service provided companionship and social contact through matching a screened, volunteer friend to an older person who may be lonely. The number of volunteer staff in the visiting service has since increased from 50 volunteers to over 200. Janferié felt she could manage this contract as part of the Age Concern service, and so her role then became full-time.

In those days the Age Concern visiting service only responded to people's loneliness in rest homes. A part-time field officer, Edna Prescott, had been doing the work for many years. *She used to bake and take food out to clients, but it wasn't a very modern way of working. It was an older model of welfare.* Janferié knew that she had to change how the work was done, and so for the first year worked alongside Edna getting to know the job first-hand. *I worked with Edna to find out what she did. She had done tremendously good work.* After suffering a stroke, Edna resigned from the role. Part of her work had been running what was then known as the Frail Club, later renamed the Prescott Club in honour of Edna and her family members who had given service to the club. Janferié sees the activities of the Prescott Club, which has been running for 41 years now, as a key part of Age Concern's services that address social isolation and the nutrition needs of older people. *The club has this year been re-named 'Club Gordon' to honour Gordon Michie, a recently deceased life member of Age Concern North Shore, as well as being a benefactor, past chairperson and long serving volunteer of the club.* The club in St Joseph's Hall on Taharoto Road, Takapuna also allows the field officer to see several clients at the same time.

Words such as 'frail' and 'elderly' were used to describe older people when Janferié first started working with Age Concern. *We try not to use 'elderly' now; we talk about 'elders' or 'older people' so it gives them more individuality. 'Elderly' is like a group, like a herd of cows, like they all behave the same.* The emphasis on aged care has

changed: priorities today are to keep people in their own homes as long as they can lead healthy, safe, independent lives. The focus of the North Shore Age Concern field officer's work has also changed to reflect that.

In 1990, Age Concern was based in the Mary Thomas Centre in Takapuna. St Anne's School for Girls had given the site in Gibbons Road to the Takapuna City Council for a community building. The Mary Thomas Centre was built there in the mid-1970s. Other tenants included field workers for the Foundation of the Blind, the Arthritis Foundation, North Shore Council of Social Services (NSCSS), and the Civilian Maimed Association (today known as Centres for Mutual Aid, CMA). Groups such as Takapuna Rotary, and the North Shore Horticultural Society also used the centre for regular meetings. *The building was lovely. The houses across the road weren't there and when you went out onto the deck you could see the beach.* As staff numbers grew, from two to twelve, more office space was needed and negotiations with the City Council ensued, but no suitable property was available. In 2003, Age Concern bought a property in Shakespeare Road, Milford, near North Shore Hospital, which is still their home today. *We looked at about 60 properties, and tried to get somewhere where there was a higher density of older people, and on bus routes, and eventually we bought this property.*

The community on the North Shore has pockets of poverty, which are the focus of Age Concern's social services outreach work. Janferié and her staff were part of a pilot scheme collecting data in the early 1990s and assessing the need for an elder abuse prevention and support service, which eventually gave rise to a national Ministry of Social Development contract for the elder abuse and neglect prevention services operating today. It is a concerning trend that a lot of older people are helping their families, who are struggling with businesses collapsing, being out of work, or with drug and alcohol problems, and are in some cases raising their own grandchildren. This can cause a great deal of



stress and lead to mental or physical abuse for the older person. *I think people are quite shocked by the fact that older people are treated in that way. That people can treat elders disrespectfully and take their money and override their rights. Eighty per cent of elder abuse is from within their families,* says Janferié.

In 1994, Age Concern North Shore secured a Ministry of Health contract to work with six other northern regional Age Concern councils in the area of health promotion for older people. The need for more easy access to information on health prevention and support available for older people led to the creation of a website called 'Age Well: Health promotion for older people in New Zealand'.¹

In 2005, Age Concern New Zealand released a document entitled *Ageing is Living: A Guide to Positive Ageing*. In it they state that positive ageing is not about how to live longer, or about how to avoid growing old; rather, it is about making the most of the benefits of being older. In 2007, North Shore City Council implemented a positive ageing strategy. The vision for this is to promote a society where older people are highly valued, and where they are recognised as an integral part of families and communities. *Along with other community groups, we got together with Council planners to say we need a positive aging policy for North Shore based on the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy, and that finally happened.* The guiding principles for the work came from the United Nations set of principles for older persons.

The first Positive Ageing Centre on the Shore was opened in March 2007, and is located above the Citizens Advice Bureau in Takapuna. Janferié recalls that there were some differences of opinion about the idea of having one centre, or hub, instead of having several centres across the Shore in each community. She describes this as a tension between the 'community house' philosophy of having something that belongs to a community, where the character and practice of the initiative is shaped according to the

needs of that community, or bringing everybody together to a more centralised service, and creating a community hub atmosphere where people across a sub-region can interact, connect and shape a service on a larger scale. The centre today provides for a number of services including Chinese elders English conversation classes, music groups, art sessions, dance groups, French lessons, a Korean group, the Embroiderers Guild, tai chi, seminars, presentations, guest speakers and more, all in one place.

Since 2010, Janferié has been part of another community-led response to encourage Auckland Council to implement the Positive Ageing Strategy Auckland-wide, and take on board the global vision of creating an 'age-friendly city'. The global age-friendly city initiative is a call to ensure that our cities, and urban communities, cater for the needs of all ages. 'An age-friendly world enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age.'²

Reflecting on her work at the grassroots level, and managing a service for a sector of people who are some of the most vulnerable, Janferié says that empowering staff is essential. *When hiring staff, you're looking for skills, but you're also looking for compassion for this kind of work. You can't pay big money; so if they are after money and a career path which does that, they aren't going to be satisfied here. They're going to move on too quickly, they will use this as a stepping stone. I have learnt to hire people for their heart. That's important to me.* Funding for this work is always precarious. *My wage is probably made up from 12 streams of funding, a little bit here, a little bit there.*

Like her mother, Janferié has been involved in supporting the work of many community organisations on the North Shore over the past 25 years. She was a recipient of a North Shore Council Civic Award for her development work on 22 different North Shore community governance committees. *I'm an organiser, and resourceful; that's my ability, I like committee work. I like helping*

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people in that way rather than being a social worker. She has also been a president of the North Shore branch of the National Council of Women of New Zealand, Takapuna Rotary Club, a past chairperson of the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand and North Shore Healthy Cities, an office bearer and committee member of NSCSS, and a member of the North Shore Suffrage coordinating committee in 1993. Today she is a justice of the peace, and chairperson of CMA and the Waitemata District Health Boards 'Health of Older People' stakeholder group.

Janferié says that she wants to grow old 'disgracefully', meaning that she will be assertive about what she needs and wants. She can access any information she needs via the internet, and she knows that her older years will be a lot easier than those of a previous generation who learnt to go without, to be thrifty, and who don't like asking for help. Her concern is that the number of people in the 80-plus age group will quadruple in the next ten years. *How are we going to manage this because the Government isn't going to throw more resources at it, and we are starting to get expectations on us as voluntary agency to pick up the slack.*

As she starts thinking about her own retirement, Janferié considers succession planning at Age Concern North Shore. The organisation is in good hands, with staff who will share their expertise with a new executive officer, but it needs *new energy in here now. I have recognised my skills are in supporting and resourcing other people, who are good at the face-to-face stuff, who are natural listeners and natural at engaging and empathising. I have grown a lot with the organisation and a new person will grow in their way with it too.*

¹ <http://www.agewell.org.nz/>

² <http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/>

