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MEDIA RELEASE

New Zealanders continue to have great quality of life Quality of Life Survey Results

Dunedin (April 2009) – Most New Zealanders continue to believe they have a very high quality of life, according to the results of a national survey released today. The biennial Quality of Life survey measures the perceptions of over 8,100 residents living in some of the country's largest cities and districts. Conducted by research company Nielsen, the survey is jointly funded by the 12 participating Councils and the Ministry of Social Development. The survey sample comprised 500 telephone interviews in each of the 12 cities and districts and 1,500 residents from the rest of New Zealand, plus 500 residents in the Wellington and Auckland regions (living outside of the larger cities in those regions).

Ninety two percent of residents living in the 12 cities rated their overall quality of life positively, with the same proportion of respondents living outside of these main areas rating it positively. Similarly, 87 percent of 12 cities' residents viewed their overall health as favourable. Those who rated their health the best live in Wellington and 'the rest of New Zealand', while those who rated it less favourably live in Waitakere, Hutt and Manukau.

Standards of living within our major cities and districts were also positive, with the majority of people interviewed (86% 12 cities, 88% 'rest of New Zealand') saying they had enough money to cover the cost of their everyday lives.

Jim Harland, Quality of Life Project Sponsor, said the survey results are heartening and "show that people's experiences of life in New Zealand's major cities and districts are generally very positive. However, the results still highlight areas to which both local and central government policy makers need to devote greater attention. Residents in our cities appear to be well placed to deal with the current economic downturn. However, our quality of life may well be affected over the short to medium term as the recession continues. Maintaining standards of living and quality of life will be a major focus for all of us in the foreseeable future."

Detail

The majority (92%) of 12 cities' residents viewed their health positively, responding with a rating of either excellent (22%), very good (39%), or good (26%). Only 6% of 12 Cities' respondents and 6% of those who live in the rest of New Zealand experienced barriers when visiting their General Practitioner compared to 20% in 2006. This is a very pleasing result and reductions in the cost of visiting GPs appears to be a major contributor. Among those who had experienced barriers the most frequently mentioned was GP access issues such as long waiting times or the doctor being too busy: 31% compared to 36% in the 'rest of New Zealand'. The cost of visits to doctors is no longer the main barrier to access: (19% in the 12 cities, down from 53% in 2006 cities, 15% in 'rest of New Zealand, down from 41% in 2006).

Most 12 cities' residents felt safe in their homes during the day (96%) and 93 percent felt safe after dark. Wellington and Dunedin are where most people feel

safe in their homes after dark, while Manukau and Tauranga are where they feel less safe. Feelings of overall safety in central city areas after dark was considerably lower with only 11 percent stating that they felt very safe or fairly safe (38%). As in 2006, the most frequently mentioned reasons for feeling unsafe was the perception of dangerous people, high profile media coverage of crime, and alcohol and drug problems in these areas. Those more likely to feel safe in their city centres after dark live in Wellington and North Shore and those less likely to feel safe live in Christchurch. Problem issues causing concern to city residents include: vandalism (53% said it was a problem in their city), car theft, damage to cars and theft from cars (62% said it was a problem) and dangerous driving, including drink driving and speeding (73% said it was a problem).

Social connectedness within our communities still needs to improve with only 54 percent of those surveyed in the 12 cities saying there was a sense of community in their local neighbourhood (56% in 2006), compared with 65 percent in the 'rest of New Zealand'. Pacific Island peoples felt more of a 'sense of community' than other ethnic groups.

Just over half (59%) of 12 cities' residents said that cultural diversity, with an increasing number of people coming to New Zealand from different cultures and nationalities, makes their city a better or much better place to live (compared to 44% in the 'rest of New Zealand'). People felt diversity brings a broader perspective, new ideas and helps people appreciate other cultures as well as their own. Only 8% said it made their city a worse or much worse place to live. These results are consistent with those found in 2006.

A lack of positive feelings about Council decision-making processes continues to be an issue, with only 34 percent of 12 cities' respondents stating that they had an understanding of Council decision-making. This compares with 43 percent of those from the 'rest of New Zealand'. Over half of the 12 cities' respondents (47%) desired a greater say in Council operations and only 44 percent said they had confidence that their Council makes decisions in the best interests of the area. The main reasons given for lack of confidence related to not liking specific decisions councils had made (or the outcomes of those decisions) and lack of public consultation or that the Council doesn't listen to public submissions.

Sixty-two percent of 12 cities' residents felt a sense of pride in their area. This remains lower than those living in the 'rest of New Zealand' (68%). Those who were significantly more likely to have felt a sense of pride in their area (either strongly agree or agree) were living in Wellington (82%), North Shore (75%), Dunedin and Christchurch (71%). While those who were significantly less likely to have felt a sense of pride in their city lived in Manukau (43%), Auckland (51%) and Porirua (53%). Key issues affecting sense of pride included the crime and safety and general city maintenance.

Improvements have been seen since 2006 in the area of city pollution. Residents' views that air pollution is a problem in their city has dropped 5% to 25%. Smaller declines have also been seen in water and noise pollution.

Only 19 percent of 12 cities' respondents were regular users of public transport (2 or more times per week). Of those using public transport once a month or less often, 48% said they had a preference for private transport and 28% said they didn't use public transport because they didn't see it as convenient. Fifty-three percent of 12 cities' residents saw public transport as affordable (compared to

49% in the 'rest of New Zealand') and 74% said it was safe (69% in 'rest of New Zealand'). The availability of public transport options is still not a significant issue as 69% of people said they were able to access a public transport facility.

There has been a decline since 2006 in the proportion of residents in the 12 cities who are physically active (49%, down from 56% in 2006). Those living in the 'rest of New Zealand' are more likely to be physically active than those in the 12 cities (57%). Ten percent of city dwellers did no physical activity, up from 7% in 2006. Mr Harland noted this as an area of concern for all local authorities. "As this trend will have serious implications for the health of our nation long-term, we all need to rise to the challenge and encourage more active and healthy lifestyles."

Jim Harland said, "the Quality of Life project provides important information about our residents for policy makers across the country. The fact that we are working on this project in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development strengthens our ability to identify significant issues and address them at both the national and local level".

About the Quality of Life 2008 Survey

The Quality of Life 2008 Survey is the third national survey in a partnership between 12 Quality of Life Project Cities and the Ministry of Social Development. The 12 cities are: North Shore, Waitakere, Auckland, Manukau, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Porirua, Hutt, Christchurch, Dunedin and Rodney District.

The 2008 survey is part of an ongoing series of surveys and research exploring quality of life and well-being issues. Topics covered include:

- Quality of Life
- Health and Well-being
- Crime and safety
- Community, Culture and Social Networks
- Council Processes
- Built Environment
- Public Transport
- Lifestyle – Work and Study

Information obtained from the survey will be used to help inform central and local government policy makers. The information will be particularly useful for cities undertaking monitoring of progress toward achieving community outcomes under their Local Government Act requirements.

Survey interviews were conducted over the telephone with a total New Zealand sample of 8,155 people, with a margin of error of +/- 1.1%. The response rate was 37%.

Local level information on the Quality of Life survey will be available to the media from each of the 12 participating Councils.

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