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**REPORT 8**  
(1215/12/IM)

## **REPORT BACK ON ATTENDANCE AT NEW ZEALAND COMMUNITY BOARD CONFERENCE, 9 TO 11 MAY 2013**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

To report back on attendance at the New Zealand Community Board's Conference held in Wanaka from Thursday 9 to Saturday 11 May 2013. The report includes the subjects covered and an opinion of the value of attendance by the Tawa Community Board representatives Malcolm Sparrow and Robert Tredger.

### **2. Details on the Conference**

*What was the name of the conference?* NZ Community Boards' Conference 2013

*What was the subject of the conference?* Local communities, local leadership.

*When was the conference held?* Thursday 9 – Saturday 11 May 2013

*Where was the conference held?* Lake Wanaka Centre, Wanaka

*Who attended from Wellington City Council?* Malcolm Sparrow (Chair, Tawa Community Board), Robert Tredger (Tawa Community Board), Christine Grace (Chair, Makara-Ohariu Community Board), Margie Scotts (Makara-Ohariu Community Board)

*Who were the main speakers? (Include details of their qualifications/expertise.)*

- Leona Dargis, Canadian youth speaker
- Monique Davidson, Community Development Manager and Gina Scandrett, Community Development, Horowhenua District Council
- Lawrence Yule, Mayor of Hastings and President, Local Government New Zealand
- Hon Chris Tremain, Minister of Local Government
- Malcolm Alexander, CEO, Local Government New Zealand
- Adam Feeley, CEO, Queenstown Lakes District Council
- Mick Lester, Chair, Community Board Executive Committee
- Sam Johnson, Youth Motivator
- Jim Diers, University of Washington
- Trevor Johnston, Retired CEO of Riverlands Ltd



### **3. Subjects Covered – Report as Below**

#### **Report of NZ Community Boards' Conference 2013**

Our journey to the conference didn't get off to a good start. Instead of arriving in Queenstown and Wanaka early evening, fog in Christchurch meant that instead we flew directly to Dunedin mid-evening and from there the four of us (Malcolm, Robert, Christine Grace and Margie Scotts) drove three hours to Wanaka, in a superb part of the country, arriving shortly after midnight.

We missed the social activities on the Thursday evening but at least we had made it for the official start of the conference on the Friday morning.

The “Community Boards’ Best Practice” awards ceremony took place on the Saturday evening.

Tawa Community Board had submitted two entries, one for Neighbours’ Weekend in Tawa in the “Enhancing Communities” category, the other for Tawa Primary Schools’ Citizenship Awards in the “Engaging Communities” category.

The winners in the three categories were as follows:

### **Leadership:**

Winner – Wanganui Rural Community Board for Rural Broadband initiative  
Runner-up – Shirley/Papanui Community Board for Groynes Dog Park, Taking the Lead

### **Engaging Communities:**

Winner – Focus Pahia for Pahia Phantom Placemakers  
Runner-up – Bay of Islands/Whangaroa Community Board for Field of Dreams

### **Enhancing Communities:**

**Winner – Tawa Community Board** for Neighbours’ Weekend in Tawa  
Runner-up – Te Puke Community Board for Te Puke Town Centre Development Plan



It was a great honour for our board to be recognised in this way for our success with Neighbours’ Weekend in Tawa, and it was a credit to the 50 local streets which took part.

This is something that the city as a whole could look at implementing on a widespread basis, driven by local communities with council support!

## **GUEST SPEAKERS**

### **Leona Dargis, Canadian youth speaker – “Leaders who engage and empower”**



With a focus upon youth, Leona is an excellent example of what can be achieved. She is from Alberta, Canada, a farming area where, together with her four sisters, she successfully took on running the mixed farming family business following a plane crash in which her parents died. “Life can change in a heartbeat.” We strongly recommend that you check her website for the full story ([www.leonadargis.com](http://www.leonadargis.com)).

She graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Agribusiness from Olds College and now represents future young leaders from around the world as an elected Next Generation (NG) Honorary Trustee for the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RASC).

In 2011 Leona received one of three prestigious Canadian Nuffield Scholarships, enabling her to study the topic of succession planning and farm diversification around the world including India, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

As a speaker she was excellent, using slides but speaking without notes and with great enthusiasm.

Her philosophy is encapsulated by the following quotes from her presentation

- “Don’t complain about things you are not prepared to change.”
- “Attitude is everything.”
- “Enjoy the little things.”
- “Challenge yourself to achieve your dreams.”

She also suggested that we try

- “Random Acts of Kindness.”
- Pay Forward – e.g. paying for an extra cup of coffee at the coffee stand, so that the person behind you (whoever they might be) has theirs paid for by a stranger.
- and the one Robert particularly liked, “Free hugs.”

They are all changes in not only our attitudes but also others!

**Monique Davidson, Community Development Manager and Gina Scandrett, Community Development, Horowhenua District Council – “Engaging communities, creating conversation and ownership”**



Their area covers Levin, Foxton and Shannon. More than 20% of the population is over 65. Average income is \$18,500 compared with the national average of \$24,000. Theirs, they claimed, is the best rural lifestyle district in New Zealand!

**Keypoints of Community Wellbeing Vision:**

- decisive from the top
- community leadership and drive
- constant and consistent communication
- collaboration
- central Government engagement
- celebrating success

Community Wellbeing Forums are held four times a year. They involve Youth Council / Older Persons' Network / Disability Leadership team / Social Sector / Education Horowhenua.

**Actions, initiatives and projects that have resulted from the Community Wellbeing Forums:**

- Disability Action plan
- Social Development strategy
- Positive Ageing strategy, including Home Safety flipchart
- Youth voice
- Social Sector trial

Advocate, facilitate, coordinate – bring everyone around the coffee table!

## **Lawrence Yule, Mayor of Hastings and President, Local Government New Zealand – “Future Focus”**



“Unless you give community boards decision-making powers, funding and respect, community boards don’t work.

Community boards are important to represent the views of local communities. In the future they will be more important than ever. Make sure your communities’ interests are heard loud and clear.

Your community will demand that there is an entity that looks after their interests.

## **Hon Chris Tremain, newly-appointed Minister of Local Government**

Our natural instinct is to defend our hometown. We all have to consider the wider issues however and put aside natural parochialism.



Four key goals the Prime Minister has:

- rebuild Christchurch
- responsibly manage the government’s finances
- build a productive and competitive economy
- deliver better public services to citizens

And various random points he made:

“If you want to spend more, someone has to pay for it.”

Central government is endeavouring to build a collaborative approach to local government.

There is no set agenda in terms of proposed amalgamation within Wellington. It is important to achieve economies of scale without sacrificing local democracy.

As a matter of interest, only two of the 21 local boards in Auckland have populations of fewer than 45,000.

**“Local democracy empowering community and national success”**

## **Malcolm Alexander, CEO, Local Government New Zealand**



What's your purpose? What's your belief? What's your cause?

People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

It's good practice to know every day how much is being spent.

We need to be efficient and effective for our communities.

## **Adam Feeley, CEO, Queenstown Lakes District Council**



In a democracy my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge!

What we do needs to be the best value for money in the way it's carried out. We need to provide consistent levels of service.

## **Sam Johnson – “What do Facebook, shovels and royalty have in common?”**



Sam Johnson, is probably best known as the founder of the internationally acclaimed Christchurch Student Volunteer Army and was named 2012 Young New Zealander of the Year.

Less well known is that he successfully stood for the Riccarton-Wigram Community Board of the Christchurch City Council in the October 2010. Johnson was reported in 2012 as having a 98% approval rating in Christchurch by The Press and is ranked number 22 on the New Zealand Readers Digest top 100 trusted people list.

His presentation was poignant, humorous, interesting, and to the point. Naturally it encompassed the Christchurch earthquake, but was focused upon how to motivate younger people. It highlighted the difference in thinking between process and “getting things done”! The Student Army achieved many things in a time of great need, in a manner and efficiency which many councils would be unable to achieve.

In the days immediately following the September 4th Christchurch earthquake, while the university's Ilam campus was closed to enable the buildings to be checked for structural safety, 21-year-old Johnson started a Facebook event called the "Student Base for Earthquake Cleanup" and invited friends to join with him in assisting local residents with non-lifesaving tasks, in particular cleaning up soil liquefaction residue on the streets and gardens of the city.

He invited 200 friends to the event which soon grew to have over 3000 attendees and over 2500 volunteers contributing to the cleanup. (Incidentally one of the other key organisers of the student initiative was Gina Scandrett, who also presented to the Conference in the Engaging Communities presentation from Horowhenua.)

Many young people are "switched off" by politics, and in particular local politics, and if we are to motivate them the traditional methods cannot be used. Sam suggested that we have to think differently and outside the square by sharing ideas, give it a go and remember it is OK to have a failure if we learn from it! Also show enthusiasm – it is contagious.

Sam is a founding Trustee of the Ministry of Awesome, a Christchurch-based idea incubator existing to create a vibrant, activated, and connected world, filled with people who are inspired to follow their passion and are supported to do so. The Ministry of Awesome runs weekly and monthly events that achieve the organisation's purposes. <http://www.ministryofawesome.com/> is worth checking out.

### **Jim Diers – "Empower your Board by mobilising your community"**



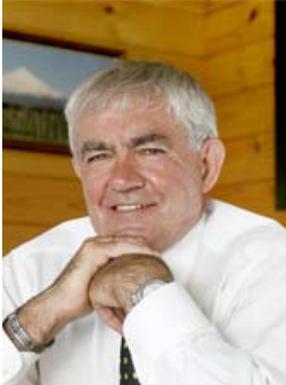
Jim Diers should be no stranger to WCC, as he has visited several times as parts of his "Inspiring Communities" tours. His enthusiasm is contagious, and he provided several examples where the changes in Seattle have impacted and improved the lives of its citizens.

He believes neighbours can generate tremendous power when they come together as a community. They can influence the actions of government, developers, and other external forces. They can also mobilise their own assets – their passion, knowledge, skills, and relationships – in support of caring communities, revitalised neighbourhoods, and a better world.

Many of the examples he gave could be implemented, but could be contentious. Other councils in New Zealand have heard Jim speak, and several are considering implementation.

He was an interesting and passionate speaker.

**Trevor Johnston, Retired CEO of Riverlands Ltd – “Spontaneous volunteers”**



Volunteering teaches you skills you can't get at work, but volunteers are hard to get. Some are doing a job that no-one else will do.

Recognise success. Thank people, especially at Christmas-time.

Decide as a board your goals and your vision. If we want to be the best board, how are we going to get there?

The community board decides what projects will make the community a better place.

As previous speakers have suggested, board members should be allocated to various projects. For example, who will run the youth programme? Be sure to pick the right person.

We need the right people in the community in the right roles. There's talent available. Identify them and shoulder tap. How many businesspeople have been asked to help in their communities?

Remember that we are dealing with 1 to 99 year olds.

Councils have a large investment in their communities. The more they see in the way of results, the more they'll be encouraged!

When seeking volunteers, phoning is always better than emailing.

There will always be 10% of people who moan. Listen to them but run your operation around the 90% who don't moan. (Newspapers love moaners).

People who do things for their community are better people because of it.

Have a go – make it happen!

**SEMINARS**

**“A licence to lead”**

**Karyl Gunn, Chair of Te Puke Community Board**



The recently-completed Te Puke Town Centre Development Plan incorporates:

- Te Puke Heritage Walkway
- amphitheatre for outdoor music, concert and theatre productions
- a destination (intergenerational) playground

It was a major undertaking for a town of 7,500 people which services an area of 17,000 people. It was driven by their community board. A portion (17%) of their Jubilee Park was sold to facilitate funding for the project. A high school youth representative was included in their team.

Their philosophy: “Is it going to be good for the community?”

“Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.” – John Quincy Adams, sixth U.S. President

### **Sam Johnson, Leona Dargis – “Communication is everything”**



Communication in the 21st Century. How do we break down the barriers of social media and efficiently use technology communication to drive social change and engage our community? This was an open discussion, responding to questions from the audience. As most of those present were from the high end of the age profile, some found it difficult to “think outside the paradigm”. Sam and Leona gave many examples from their experiences, some of

which had worked well, and others – not so well. However by the end of the session there was a general opinion that change and technology had to be confronted, and was inevitable. It will be difficult in many cases to implement, because we are restrained by “systems”, “resistance to change”, etc, but it has to happen.

### **Sam Marshall, staff member, Thames District Council**

Their new Mayor is empowering community boards by moving governance decision-making closer to those being governed and recognising their diverse communities and their needs.

There are lots of different points-of-view about the success (or otherwise) of the new Auckland Council.

Local boards in Auckland have responsibility for budgets totalling \$488m. Their roles are to lead, advocate, fund and facilitate.

In the Thames district, community boards are responsible for governance decisions for parks & reserves, halls, libraries, swimming pools and town centre upgrades – an impressive list of responsibilities.

Community boards are expected to build relationships and reflect local needs. The council has accountability, but boards govern and staff deliver.

Community board chairs in the Thames district are invited to sit at the table every time their council meets.

He stated that some councils are open to local grassroots decision-making. Others want to “centralise”.

### **Alan Taylor, Chair of Wanganui Rural Community Board**

Chairs of boards need to ascertain areas of strength amongst their members and assign specific roles to those members.

“We are at our best when we are at the service of those with whom we share joy.”

### **“Inspire and achieve”**

### **Barbara MacLennan, Inspiring Communities**

“Everything is changing. Change is the only constant. Be prepared to proactively adapt and respond.”

Community-led development is working together to create and achieve locally-owned visions and goals.

As the previous speaker suggested, it makes sense to ascertain what the capabilities of various board members are.

Community building and community resilience are inter-connected. In terms of neighbourhood strengthening, a community board should be proactively making connections with other potential helping agencies.

## **4. Benefit to Council/Elected members**

*How do you feel the conference benefitted the Council?*

A conference such as this always provides board members with new ideas as to how they can better serve their communities. This one was no exception. That is the role, after all, of both the community board and the council.

*Did the conference add to your ability to perform your job and increase your understanding of the subject area? How?*

We came away with new ideas and initiatives, and the important role that board members play in their communities was emphasised once again.

*Was there an opportunity to network with other attendees? Was this a useful opportunity?*

There was plenty of opportunity to mix with other attendees, and that’s an important part of getting together with 200 or so fellow delegates at this sort of occasion. It’s always useful picking up tips from other boards on how they operate. It was also good to rub shoulders with fellow Zone 4 community board members.

*What recommendations or suggestions would you make for the Council/Officers to follow up?*

Remind Council/Officers that Community Board members are the elected members closest to people in the community and have a good down-to-earth understanding of what's happening in their particular neck of the woods.

Councils should see community boards as a benefit, not as a cost.

Community Board chairs should have the opportunity to meet with their Mayor and perhaps some other senior council officers, as appropriate, perhaps a couple of times a year. The chair of the Tawa Community Board already meets twice a year with the Mayor of Wellington.

### **Key points:**

- Community boards work at grassroots level.
- Community Boards are the eyes and ears of individual communities.
- We love our communities – that's why we "do" Local Government.
- Communities that are connected and know their neighbours are likely to be more robust in a disaster. We don't have to wait for a natural disaster to happen before we pull together as a community.
- It's important to communicate.
- It's important to identify the skills of various board members and use them accordingly.
- Local community boards should get together every so often.
- A sense of community is important to most people.
- People who do things for their community are better people because of those actions.

Report prepared by: *Malcolm Sparrow and Robert Tredger*