
REPORT 6
(1215/52/IM)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE REPORT

1. Purpose of Report

To report on Councillor and Officer attendance at the 2006 Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) Conference held in Christchurch on 17–19 July 2006.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Note that the 2007 Local Government New Zealand Annual Conference is to be held in Dunedin.*

3. Background

The 2006 Local Government New Zealand Annual Conference was held in Wellington from 17–19 July. It was attended by the Mayor Kerry Prendergast, Deputy Mayor Alick Shaw, Councillors Ian McKinnon, Ray Ahipene Mercer and Tawa Community Board member Ngaire Best. Council officers in attendance were Garry Poole, Karen Wallace, Michael Webster, Ernst Zollner, John McGrath and Debbie Gee.

4. Discussion

4.1 Conference Theme

The theme of the Conference was *Leading Communities* and this was emphasised by LGNZ President **Basil Morrison** in his Presidential address. The importance of maintaining and building relationships with central government was elaborated upon, both to ensure that issues are heard, but also that input to proposed legislation is made at an early stage.

Mayor Kerry Prendergast spoke at the opening of the conference wearing two hats: one as Mayor of the host city, and the other as Vice-President of Local Government New Zealand. In her speech, Her Worship raised the issue of rates

increases and posed the question, “Just what is the role of a local authority?” She asked whether local authorities should simply concentrate on infrastructure or if they have a role in the economies of their cities. Mayor Prendergast said new central government policies and legislation had had a huge impact on local government and on rates because of the additional compliance cost that result. She cited the example of the costs of preparation and consultation associated with the Long Term Council Community Plans.

The Mayor also raised the need for ongoing investment in infrastructure maintenance, noting that the cost of not investing is high. She concluded by stating that Wellington City Council had taken on a leadership role with an eye to a bright and prosperous future with a sound and sustainable economy.

In her return address, **Prime Minister Helen Clark** responded detailing the strong collaborative relationship which had been carefully built and maintained over the terms of the Labour Government, ensuring local government views were captured and considered at an early stage. Ms Clark said she believed that through the Central Government-Local Government Forum a means had been found of working together that is task-focused and looks to meet challenges and solve problems.

The Prime Minister congratulated all councils for completing their LTCCPs for the next ten years, which was the first time they had gone through the full process, and acknowledged the effort that had gone into these.

She acknowledged the need for sound modern infrastructure and noted the government’s investments in land transport including public transport, sewerage and water, and also raised the issues of telecommunications and broadband and natural disaster planning and management.

4.2 International Speakers - Keynote Addresses

Overseas keynote speakers of the conference were Jim Soorly, the former Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Dr Mildred Warner, Associate Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, New York, and Hon. Jeff Kennett, former Victorian State Premier responsible for implementing radical and far-reaching reforms to the Victorian public service.

The focus of Jim Soorly’s inspiring presentation was on his “Six Cs for Local Government Leadership”, namely:

- Conviction
- Commitment
- Courage
- Competition
- Communication
- Compassion

He also talked about new models of partnership and stressed the value of partnerships for organisational culture: what we learn from partners begins to transform the organisation. Another point of note was his suggestion that local authorities should consider shared services as they will face huge pressure due to staff shortages resulting from global competition.

In her presentation on Serving Citizens in a Global World, **Dr Mildred Warner** described New Zealand as a leader in local government reform, and posed the question, “Is this as good as it gets?”

Dr Warner’s work focuses primarily on local government service delivery and new community development model for addressing human services. One of her most salient observations was that a key role for local government is to “provide a sense of community in a global world.”

She referred to her research exploring issues of privatisation, devolution and economic development. She discussed the potential for market based solutions in public service delivery but also cautioned about the limits to market approaches and that markets do not ensure equity, voice or justice. She noted that internationally, privatisation had not delivered the savings expected and an increasing move from market management to partnerships.

Dr Warner talked about the need for local authorities to find the right balance between environmental, social, economic and cultural demands.

Jeff Kennett covered a wide range of topics. Among the observations he made was that two strengths shared by New Zealand and Australia were our strong democracy, and our distance from the rest of the world, which means that from a global perspective the problems and challenges that we face are relatively insignificant. He warned against this allowing us to develop a “soft underbelly”.

He also believed that as communities in strong democracies, we are increasingly over-governed and we risk becoming overly concerned with consultation, which in turn leads to delayed decisions. The challenge for local government, he said, was how to stay relevant in a changing world.

Mr Kennett outlined his “Five Fingers of Leadership”, namely:

- Clear goals
- Strategies to deliver goals
- Importance of people
- Consistency of policy
- Delivery of outcomes in line with your goals

Mr Kennett warned that short-term popularity comes at the expense of good management. He said leadership should not be about popularity, it should be about providing a clear pathway to a place where people have not been before.

4.3 New Zealand Speakers

The New Zealand speakers were John Allan, Chief Executive of New Zealand Post, Alan Milne, Mayor of Kapiti Coast District Council and Chris Moller, Chief Executive Officer of the New Zealand Rugby Union.

John Allen gave a lively and engaging presentation focusing on the attributes of “real leaders”. The attributes he identified were:

- Intellectual curiosity
- Knowing yourself
- Being a builder (not a destroyer)
- Taking risks
- Being accountable
- Telling the truth
- Ability to unlock potential

In relation to local government, his key point was that local authorities should build interesting cities, communities and places, and in his view the important factors in doing so were:

- Infrastructure
- Diverse population
- Vibrant arts
- Access to outdoors
- Lifestyle

Allan Milne spoke about Climate Change and the roles and responsibilities of local authorities. His key challenge to the conference in respect of climate change was to: Accept, Challenge, and Act.

Chris Moller's address was on winning the New Zealand campaign to win the rights to host the 2011 Rugby World Cup and the opportunities that could present for local authorities and regions in terms of hosting games.

4.4 Political Speakers

The Minister of Local Government Hon Mark Burton and the Leader of the Opposition Dr Don Brash both addressed the conference.

Dr Don Brash's speech – entitled “Crisis of Confidence Looms in Local Government” - was somewhat challenging, with him contending that local government in New Zealand today reminded him of “frustrated middle management”, working hard to lead in its area but beset by constant demands from above. He also stated that it would simply not be possible for this country to dramatically increase its economic performance without both central and local government very substantially improving the way they serve the community. However, he also stated that local government had great resources

and that its leaders had great talent and wanted to do the best for their communities.

Mark Burton followed Dr Brash and stated that community leadership is about involving New Zealanders in decisions that affect them, and working to balance their immediate needs against those of future communities. Mr Burton acknowledged that local government is pivotal to this country's well being and described LTCCPs as symbolic of a new area for local government in New Zealand. He also referred to the importance of the relationship between central and local government and the partnership approach in infrastructure. Mr Burton also pointed out that between 1999 and 2004 central government funding was the fastest growing source of revenue for local government.

4.5 Concurrent Sessions

The conference feature concurrent break-out sessions on the second day, the topics of which were:

Strategic futures: an interactive workshop that explored four scenarios for New Zealand's future looking two generations ahead, using an interactive tool created by Landcare Research's Sustainable Business and Government Team.

The billion dollar question: looked at the funding and sustainability of roading and transport infrastructure and the influence or impact of central government agencies on local government decision-making.

Working together to build strong communities: examined what community boards actually do and how they differ from councils, and also looked at the secret to building good relationships between councils and their community boards to achieve community outcomes.

More than just a game: looked at the range of community outcomes that can be met through sport and recreation, from building social cohesion and inclusion to providing pathways for youth.

Cronulla: Could it happen here?: considered how to build communities in a multi-ethnic society, and examined the factors underlying the Cronulla riots in Sydney to and the broader environment within which they occurred.

Is there life after community outcomes?: following the adoption of Long Term Council Community Plans, this workshop examined effective ways for councils to work with key players to implement them and achieve outcomes that would be beyond their capacity to implement alone.

Driving your economy: the first part of this session focused on how communities can attribute what they do to their outcomes; the second part focused on good telecommunications infrastructure as a vital driver for economic development.

Weighing local costs and national benefits: considered the options available for local authorities in dealing with major infrastructure projects under the Resource Management Act and their practical implications.

4.6 AGM

Outcomes to the remits to the AGM were as follows:

Remit

Proposed By

Public Sale of Fireworks

Hutt City

*The meeting **agreed** that Local Government New Zealand (advocate that) Central Government imposes tighter controls on the public sale of fireworks.*

Telecommunications Act

Porirua City

*The meeting **agreed** that Local Government New Zealand seek to have the Government promote an amendment to s 142(1) of the Telecommunications Act 2001, so that a local authority has the normal rights of a landowner to decide whether to agree to location of telecommunications or other facilities on road reserve.*

Land Transport Funding

Hutt City

*The meeting **agreed** that Local Government New Zealand agree that the present funding arrangements for land transport are currently incapable of meeting New Zealand's needs into the future.*

Wandering Stock

Whangarei District

*The meeting **agreed** that Local Government New Zealand request Government to review the Impounding Act 1955 'Stock straying or Wandering on Roads'.*

The full minutes of the AGM are not yet available from LGNZ. They should be available in about two weeks.

4.8 LGNZ Conference 2007

The 2007 LGNZ Conference is to be held in Dunedin from 15-18 July.

4.9 Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2007

The fourth Commonwealth Local Government Conference will be held in Auckland in March 2007, which is expected to attract delegates from more than fifty Commonwealth countries across Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe.

3. Conclusion

This 2006 LGNZ Conference was held in Wellington from 17 to 19 July. This paper reports back on the attendance by the Mayor, Councillors, CEO and officers.

Contact Officer: *Debbie Gee, Director Communications and Marketing*

Supporting Information
<p>1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome <i>Attendance is indirectly aimed at informing the development and achievement of the range of Council outcomes.</i></p>
<p>2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact <i>No direct LTCCP reference</i></p>
<p>3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations <i>No direct Treaty of Waitangi implications</i></p>
<p>4) Decision-Making <i>No significant decision required.</i></p>
<p>5) Consultation a) General Consultation <i>Not required.</i> b) Consultation with Maori <i>Not required.</i></p>
<p>6) Legal Implications <i>No specific legal implications</i></p>
<p>7) Consistency with existing policy <i>Consistent with existing policy</i></p>