



Celebrating 20 years of Community Boards
REFLECT • REFRESH • REVITALISE

Tawa Community Board report

*2009 New Zealand Community Board's Conference
Christchurch 19 to 22 March 2009*



By Graeme Hansen and Dennis Sharman

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Executive Overview

We would like to thank the Tawa Community Board members for nominating us to attend the conference and the Wellington City Councillors for agreeing to fund two delegates.

The theme for this conference was to "reflect, refresh and revitalize" and as it is the 20th Year celebration of Community Boards it was a worthy theme. As both Graeme Hansen and Dennis Sharman are both new to the Community Board we went to the conference to get a better understanding of the local democratic role that Community Board's play and how can we as elected members do a better job of representing our community.

So for us our theme was to "Listen, Learn and Understand". By having two members there we were able to go to different workshops, we were able to discuss those workshops in depth and then reflect back on how the key message might impact or affect Tawa community or the Tawa Community Board.

Some of the key findings that we have found from the conference were:

*The roles of Community Boards are very different right across the country
Relationships between Council and Community Boards are very different
Delegations and the functions of Community Boards vary significantly
Community Board that work well with their community provide a valuable function for Councils*

The Minister of Local Government believes that Community Boards provide a key link in the local democratic process

That Council and Community Boards that have clear delegations and clear roles and responsibilities to each other work well together

That the development of community advocacy plans are assisting Community Boards with their work

We believe that the Tawa Community Board should develop a community based Advocacy Plan for Tawa.

We also believe that there is going to be an ongoing reorganization of Councils and local government and that Community Board's will continue to play a significant role in the local democratic process.

That there should be some discussion between the Council and the Tawa Community Boards on the "Terms of Reference – Tawa Community Board" so that the Tawa Community Board can be a more effective in its work with the community and Council.

If proposed changes in Auckland flow through to Wellington then Community Board's are going to become more common in the future. It seems to us, that it is important for there be discussion with Council on delegations, roles and processes so that we can get better outcomes in Wellington though the work of the Community Board's.

Pre-Conference

Pools and Penguins

While the conference did not commence until the evening of Thursday 19 March 2009 we attended a pre-conference community tour entitled pools and Penguins. This involved a guided tour of:

*The newly opened Jellie Park pool complex
The Antarctic Centre.*

Jellie Park Pool

We were able to view a complex that started as an outdoor swimming pool many years ago and has over the years been extended to include hydroslides and an indoor pool.

The latest \$12,000,000 redevelopment added:

*a new, second, 25 metre, 8-lane, pool which is 2m deep
a new pool for pre-schoolers and their parents
a new indoor hydroslide.
a new spa pool
a new steam room and sauna
a gym
a dance and exercise room.*

At present the gym and dance/exercise room has only a 7% cost recovery.

There were a number of changes that they implement in the redevelopment after feedback from users. Asian users did not like the open plan changing rooms or open plan showers. So the Council created sections that did offer some privacy but also allowed staff to see if there were patrons in the changing rooms. The showers were also separate. However, having the showers separate there has been a significant increase in amount of time people shower and this has created queuing for women's showers.

Antarctic Centre

The Antarctic Centre which is one of Christchurch's premium tourist venues. We learnt that it was founded by the Christchurch City Council, sold to private ownership and expanded by its owners. The owners have been concerned that there is not more linkages between them and Council to develop the attraction.



Conference Function

2009 marked the 20th year of Community Boards and it was fitting that the conference be held in this year and that it be attended by more delegates than any other Community Board's conference. It was also fitting that the Prime Minister, the Hon John Keys, attended the Conference Opening and the 20th Anniversary Celebratory Dinner and spoke to the delegates. His speech was very supportive of the work carried out by Community Board members.

The evening was also to celebrate the work of the Community Boards with the awards evening. The Eastbourne Community Board won the Consultation Award called "How Consultation Avoided the Battle of Korowhia"

The Supreme award was won by the combined Clevedon, Howick, Mangere and Otara Community Boards that developed joint Community Advocacy Plans.

The function was also an opportunity to talk to other Community Boards about how they operated, what level of delegations that they had, what community engagement that they did, and what the relationship with their Council's was like.

Overall the Community Boards that we talked to operated in many different ways, and that each Community Board has found its own way about how it worked with the community and the Councils.





Plenary Sessions

In the first Plenary Session we heard:

Mary Hay (Christchurch City Council) who had been to a conference in Adelaide on consultative techniques. She was to run one of the workshops on the subject.

Christoph Baker (Assistant to the Executive Director of the Italian Committee for Unicef about Child and Youth Friendly Communities). He was to run one of the workshops on a similar subject.

We and a few other delegates had the pleasure of enjoying a NZ roast meal, at a hotel on the banks of the Avon, with Christoph. He had been in Wellington on Wednesday and was singing the praises of Wellington City.

Yvonne Palmer (chair New Zealand Community Board's Executive Committee) on the future of Community Boards. With the Royal Commission on Local Government due it is an uncertain time for all elected members of local government.

In the second Plenary Session we heard:

The views of the Minister of Local Government, the Hon. Rodney Hide, on the challenges facing Local Government over the next twenty years. As the Royal Commission's report on Auckland was due to be released he could only reflect on what might be. His speech is what we have come to expect from Rodney. It was fast paced, funny, off the wall but lacking any real content. Rodney was very supportive of Community Boards and the work that they do with communities. It not surprising that the Minister has supported Community Boards in the redevelopment of Auckland.

Steve Henry (Centre for Sustainable Practice, Otago Polytech) on how Sweden is building a town based purely on sustainable practice. This was a slimmed down version of his workshop on this topic. A number of people were unable to grasp the methodology that he proposed.

There was panel discussing a recent decision of the courts over turning a Christchurch City Council decision on raising rents for their residential units. As a only a few knew the case and the facts around the council's decision and the court's decision it was the hardest session to get through. Questions were invited from the floor and the most commonsense question, concerning the consultation and decision making process used, the panel refused to answer.

In the third Plenary Session we heard:

Ross Banbury (Manager Papanui Youth Development Trust) about a trust for youth, who has by hard work, community funding and agreement with a local church was able to provide youth services in a building that was developed by the Trust on church grounds.

This was a real community project that has great outcomes for the youth in the community.

In the fourth Plenary Session we heard:

Dr Phillip Bagshaw (Charity Hospital and 2008 North & South New Zealander of the Year) talk about the development of a hospital that carries out predominantly elective surgery for those who have no means to pay for it themselves. With a lot of fundraising and donation of time and products saw the purchase of a house, multi million dollar renovations and the house has now been converted into a specialist surgery and recovery unit.

There is no reason a hospital of this nature could not be established in Wellington.

Getrude Matashe who talked about her life before immigrating to New Zealand and her new passion, which is development of schools in Zimbabwe.

We learnt that she was raised in a poor part of Zimbabwe. How her parents, by hard work, ensured they received a private school education. How most of her siblings are in professional positions. How she nearly moved to New York in 2001 and New Orleans in later years.

The building she would have worked in, in New York was destroyed on 11 September 2001 and the house was destroyed by cyclone Katrina.

We learnt that she has settled in Wellington, has three businesses and by plain hard work has overcome the difficulties she has faced. She is now fund raising for providing schools and education in Zimbabwe.

In the fifth Plenary Session we heard from Lawrence Yule (President of Local Government NZ and Mayor of Hastings) on where Local Government is heading. The reality is that until the Royal Commission delivers the results of its deliberations the makeup of Local Government is an unknown.

Workshops

There were ten workshops available and you could attend four of these over two days.

Graeme Hansen attended:

Community Boards Preparing for Vibrant Diverse Communities

Getrude Matshe provided a brief talk on her journey from Zimbabwe to New Zealand and how her life experienced has shaped who she is now. Mansoor Khawaja provided past present and estimate future statistical data on the ethnicity patterns within NZ.

While both were excellent speakers there was in reality noting that would be of value to the Tawa Community. Tawa with its Pot Luck Dinners, run by the Tawa Community centre and the displays of cultural and ethnic groups in the Tawa Community Centre is already providing more for the various ethnic groups coming to Tawa than many Community Boards and Local Authorities do or have planned. One of the interesting areas that came out of Getrude's talk was that while she had learnt and spoken English, lived in South Africa, England and America she was not prepared for the New Zealand style of English. She found we talk very fast and mumble.

Community Boards Leading Community Safety

Dr Carolyn Coggan, Victoria Owen (Local Government BZ and Inspector John Price (Christchurch Police) provide an interactive session on what makes our communities safe or unsafe.

Inspector Price asked if people believed that they were in New Zealand's most dangerous city. Most felt they were. He used statistics to show that the reality and what the press reported differed.

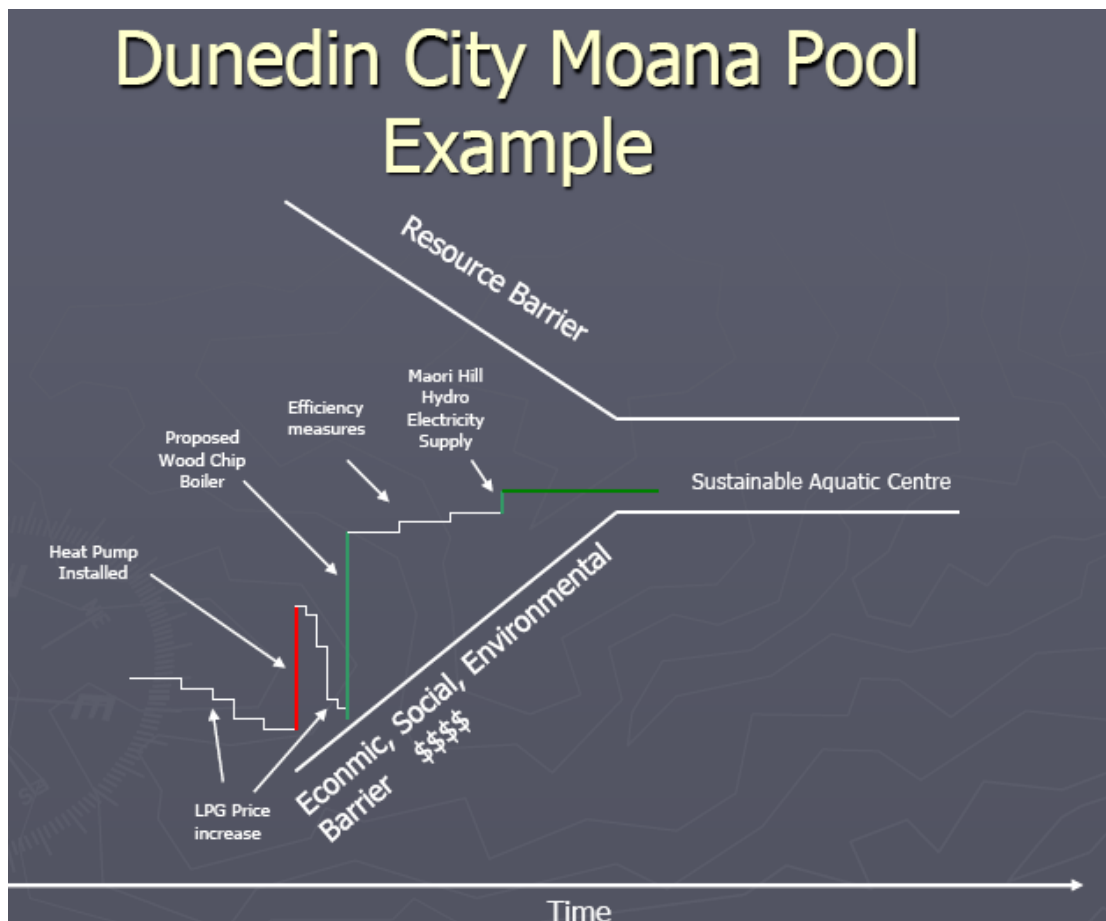
It was an interesting workshop but in reality Tawa is already undertaking a lot of what was proposed. Tawa has feedback from its community constable, the District Commander of Police, the fire service and supports the work of, and has members active in, the Tawa Emergency management Group and Tawa Community Patrols.

Dennis Sharman attended:

Steve Henry - Sustainable Practices.

Steven spoke about the importance of having a cohesive approach to sustainable practices and that Council and Community Boards have to be working together to implement those changes. Without the alignment then there is not structure to the approach to sustainability.

Steve had some tools that he uses to develop plans for sustainable practices, with the main tool we looked at called the Sustainability Funnel. The funnel is a way for a community to view the decline in natural resources against the rise in cost of a particular practice. Over time the role of the funnel is to show the community how it might change a particular practice from being unsustainable to being sustainable. An example of this was used in developing the Dunedin City Moana Pool



Sustainable practices are a ongoing need and there are a number of opportunities in Tawa where a review of the sustainable practices will benefit the community. The Tawa Community Board will look at this issue when it develops it planning document.

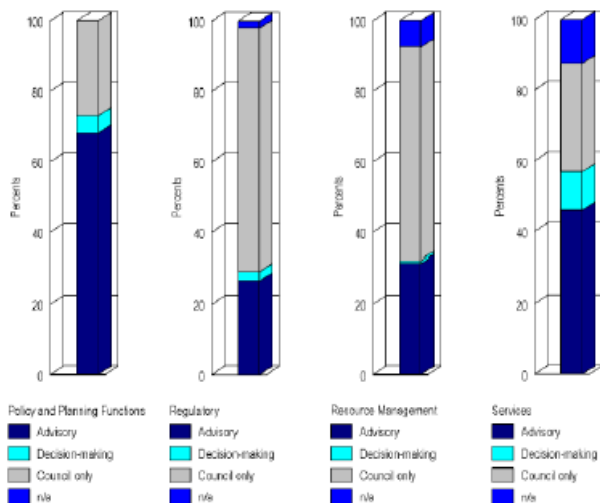
Enhancing Communities through Local Democracy – Mary Richardson, Bruce Robertson and Dr Jean Drage

This was an interactive workshop that discussed a number of issues around what local democracy is and how it is interpreted in the Local Government Act 2002. The session also looked at the findings of the research by Mary Richardson on Community Boards roles, functions and relationships.

The research showed:

Findings

- Councils were less likely to delegate decision-making or advisory roles in 2007 than in 1995.



In relationship to Consultation the results were:

Consultation



- Community boards are in an ideal position to reflect the views of their communities
- Appeared that
 - Most did not play a significant role in planning or managing council consultation processes
 - Little involvement beyond community level
 - Some instances community engagement "professionalised" with little, if any, elected member involvement

There was also some interesting research on Community Board consultation on LTCCP.

LTCCP

- The research suggested that
 - Councils had formal procedures whereby community boards could comment on LTCCPs and annual plans.
 - In some cases limited to making a submission alongside community groups and residents.
 - Only a few cases where community boards had input into the processes themselves.

There was significant debate and discussion on the role of Community Boards and how the different Councils delegated, engaged and worked with the Boards. It is clear that some Community Boards were an integral part of the local democratic process and other Community Boards were not. We believe that the Tawa and Makara Community Boards should meet with Council after the elections and discussed the roles that the Boards will play in the long term local democratic process.

Both of us attended the following workshops:

The value of Council/Community Board Relationships for Community Leadership

Dale Williams (Mayor Otorohanga District Council) and Tony Marryat (CEO Christchurch City Council) provided an insight into the relationship their councils have with Community Boards. Both were in favour of Community Boards and believed that their Council would be worse off if they did not have Community Boards. Tony Marryatt did not believe Christchurch City could function without Community Boards.

Interestingly both have provided their Community Boards with high levels of delegation.

Dr James Stratford (Department of Internal Affairs) spoke on the legislative areas surrounding the relationship and on the perceived trust between Councils and Boards.

Some things that came for the workshop:

That there are huge differences between Community Boards on the issues of Relationships and Delegations. The Councils that did not grant delegations generally were those who regularly voted for the disestablishment of Community Boards. That many of the Councils who do not provide delegations then argue that the Community Boards serve no purpose and then look to disestablish them. That Community Boards need, at the commencement of the triennium, to sit down with the Council, Mayor and CEO and work through the issue of delegations.

It is clear that the Tawa and Ohariu Makara Community Boards need to work with the Wellington City Council to continue to develop the roles and responsibilities of the Community Boards.

Achieving best Practice Consultation with Controversial Projects

Mary Hay (Christchurch City Council) explained and then had us carry out practical examples of consultation.

We used the three methods that she saw at her conference in Adelaide.

These were:

People were randomly allocated to tables. One of the group stayed at that table, facilitated discussion and took notes. Everyone else moved to separate tables. The intent was that each facilitator ended up with a broad summary of issues raised and possible responses.

People were randomly allocated to tables. Each group looked at a topic, wrote notes, questions and possible answers on a white board. Each group would then move to the next topic and repeat the process until all topics had been considered by all groups.

The groups from (2) ranked with dots the notes, questions and possible answers they believed the most relevant or correct.

We believe the process is sufficiently beneficial that we will propose it to the Tawa Community Board to use for the forthcoming consultations on the proposed Tawa Community Plan.

Off Site Practical Leadership Training

Due to commitments in Wellington Dennis Sharman flew back to Wellington on Saturday evening and Graeme Hansen attended the offsite practical leadership training.

Saturday Night saw offsite practical leadership training. This was held in an open, disused hangar at Wigram in windy and cold conditions. The scenario turned out to be Christchurch City having been hit by an earthquake of 8 on the Richter scale.

Delegates were split into teams and worked in various parts of the Emergency Management. Each team was lead by a person from the Christchurch Emergency management division. What ensued was chaos and was thus realistic in respect of what we will experience should Wellington be hit by a similar sized earthquake. The exercise was followed by dinner in another cold hangar with food being delivered spasmodically by Salvation Army truck. Food was in plastic 'takeaway boxes', knife and fork and glasses were plastic. It was intended to give, and succeeding in giving, delegate's an idea of what it would be like at a Community Disaster Centre following a disaster.

As the spokesman for our team, and as a Wellington Emergency Management Office volunteer, I was fortunate, prior to our dinner, to address the delegates, the Mayors that were present and the Minister of Civil Defence on the exercise and the degree of training provided to elected members.

Many Councils require that their elected members to undertake a familiarisation of, and undertake a degree of training in, Emergency Management. Wellington City needs to do this.

We think that Wellington City needs:

An Emergency Management office with staff that is fully qualified and experienced in emergency management operation. There can be no doubt that personnel who specialize in this field will be better able to respond in an emergency. All elected members to have had some degree of training in emergency management operations so that they can assist in the event of an emergency.

A dedicated team of volunteers, who are trained to a high standard by the WEMO personnel, and confident in the ability of the WEMO team to lead them in an emergency situation.



Post Conference

Community Heritage Tour

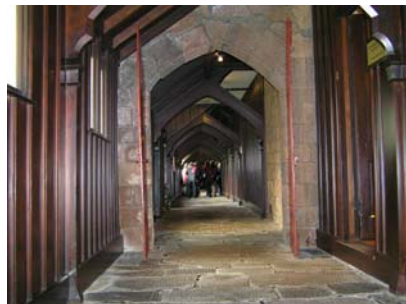
The conference formally wound up at the end of the Dinner.

On Sunday morning Graeme Hansen attended a Community Tour touring buildings that are on the Historic Places Trust register, in the Christchurch City Council plan and, building sites of buildings that were not on the District Plan and were thus demolished.

It brought home the importance of ensuring heritage and historic buildings are appropriately noted, classified and recorded on the District Plan. Registration on the Historic Places Trust does not give any certainty to a buildings continued presence.



graffiti in the Lecture Theatre used by Ernest Rutherford and others (oldest found was 1901)



Provincial Government Building



Tram in historic New Regent Street

Summary

We once again thank the Tawa Community Board members and Wellington City Councillors for the ability to attend this conference.

Like any conference you learn a lot from the formal sessions but in many cases the interaction of people in similar positions to yourself also provides additional learning. We have learnt from others and have provided insight to others.

We now have a network of fellow Community Board members who have a common interest in their communities, and we can help each other for the betterment of our communities.