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**REPORT 5**  
*(1215/12/IM)*

## **NEW ZEALAND COMMUNITY BOARDS' CONFERENCE, 5 - 7 MAY 2011: REPORT BACK**

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

To provide Community Board members with report back from our attendance at the New Zealand Community Boards' Conference held in Rotorua on 5 to 7 May 2011.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Tawa Community Board:

- 1. Receive the information.*

*Report prepared by: Graeme Hansen and Malcolm Sparrow*



**TAWA COMMUNITY BOARD REPORT ON NZ COMMUNITY  
BOARDS' CONFERENCE  
ROTORUA MAY 2011**



by  
**Malcolm Sparrow (Chair)**  
**Graeme Hansen (Deputy Chair)**

## Opening Ceremony and Awards

Our journey to the conference didn't get off to a good start. Instead of arriving in Rotorua early afternoon and doing some sightseeing, fog in Rotorua, Taupo, Tauranga and Hamilton grounded our plane in Wellington.

Eventually we managed to get on a flight to Hamilton and along with Christine Grace, from the Makara/Ohariu Community Board, headed by car to Rotorua.

We arrived at our hotel late afternoon, stretched our legs and headed for the opening dinner. Some were not as fortunate and they missed the award ceremony, most of their dinner and an excellent, soul searching talk from the Dean of the Christchurch Anglican Cathedral, the Very Reverend Peter Beck.

Peter Beck spoke on the trials and tribulations of the residents of Christchurch and the actions of Civil Defence. It made us all realise that we need to look carefully at where elected members, particularly Community Board members, fit into the picture. Community Board members, being at the coal face, so to speak, know more about the needs, the strengths and the assets of the local community than credit is given for.

We attach, as Appendix 1, a copy of the slides used during his speech as they are important to realise that a major disaster requires everyone to be working as a team towards a common outcome.

The award ceremony brought home that many of the things our Board did would qualify for the awards. Kaitake Community Board won an award for their Facebook page. We did not believe that it was any better than the one that has been started for Tawa.

However, the award winners were:

Consultation	No winner but the Kaitake Community Board were highly commended for their Facebook page.
Heritage	Henderson Community Board for their Lancaster Memorial. This is a memorial to aviators from Henderson who lost their lives over Luxembourg during WWII.
Partnership	Kaitake Community Board for their beach based environmental activities on Oakura Beach.
Significant Achievement	Bluff Community Board for the retention of the Bluff Swimming Pool which was faced with closure.
Harmonious Relations	No entries.

Facilitation	No entries.
Leadership	Otaki Community Board for their youth programmes.
Working with Children & Youth	Otaki Community Board for their youth programmes.
Safety	Murupara Community Board for their partnership with Police on crime matters.
Working with Maori	No entries.
Supreme Award	Henderson Community Board.

*It should be noted that several, possible entries were on a computer unable to be accessed in central Christchurch.*

## **Keynote Speakers**

### **Dale Williams, Mayor of Otorohanga** “Community Engagement/Working with Youth”

Otorohanga has a population of 9500 and 19 elected members.

The Mayor is part of a Mayoral Youth Task Force whose aim is to see all young people under 25 engaged in appropriate education, training, work or other activities that contribute to their long-term economic wellbeing and independence.

Focus of the Mayoral Youth Task Force: “Every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own community.”

Community boards have their finger on the pulse. They have a fair idea what the local community thinks about this or that.

Community boards provide advice to Council as to how a given project/ programme might be best implemented.

Community board members are the closest elected members to the actual community.

## **Mike Cohen, NZCBEC Chair**

**“Local Governance that makes a difference for our communities”**

Community boards are the most vulnerable part of local government. They have to justify their existence every six years.

The role of an effective community board is:

- 25% governance
- 75% community engagement

We need to be seen to be adding value.

We need to be proactive.

Local people need to feel ownership of their community board.

We need to develop a good working relationship with our Mayor and Council.

We should encourage locals to use the system, in our case dial 499 4444. The community board gets involved when the system fails.

We need to use local media, billboards, and newsletter drops to communicate with our community.

**From his website: “I continue to be PROACTIVE on community issues, encourage local input, ensuring that local DECISIONS are made for the benefit of LOCAL PEOPLE.”**

I feel strongly about the importance of having friendly, vibrant, caring, thriving and therefore safe communities ... That sense of community, that sense of looking out for your neighbour and caring about those in your community that I had grown up with in the 1950s and 60s is facing extinction.

Mine is a great community of interest to be involved in. For the last 10 years we have had no traditional ratepayers group. Local people have felt ownership of their local community board. If they have had a great idea or initiative or an issue, they have come directly to the community board. We can have 250 people at a community board meeting. Local people have seen their community board as the easiest way of getting traction into the local government system.

The publication of our fortnightly community paper can not be underestimated in enabling a wider communicating of local ideas, projects, initiatives and issues and generating dialogue on them.

Our Community Board has been able to tap into the experience, local knowledge, skills, and expertise within our local community.

**Adrienne Staples, Mayor of South Wairarapa**  
“Empowering Communities during Civil Defence emergency”

In terms of local government, people’s major concerns are that what’s outside their door is working properly - water, sewerage, roading, etc.

She talked about civil emergencies are elaborated as follows: a civil emergency could be SARS, bird flu, personal loss (e.g. murder in community), flooding, and earthquake. Community Board members can provide leadership in their communities in these sorts of situations.

**Hon Rodney Hide, Minister of Local Government**

Rodney’s speech was pro Community Boards. While it might be said that his speech was tailored to the audience we believe that he was genuine in his desire to see local issues dealt with at the local level.

He sees Community Boards (and Local Boards in Auckland’s case) as the closest form of governance to the people. He favours decisions being made at the lowest level, closest to the community where Community Boards listen to local voices and act on local issues.

It was clear that he did not agree with the Commission’s abolition of Community Boards and he has worked hard to ensure local democracy in the form of Local Boards. We believe that Councils need to better appreciate the strengths at the local level and better utilise and involve the Community Board members.

While he had major input into the final form of local governance in Auckland, and there is a Cabinet paper on reform, it is pleasing that there will be no race to put in place a similar format in Wellington.

His final comment was that No decisions on the review will be made until well into 2014.

We attach, as Appendix 2, a copy of the Minister’s speech as it is important to all members of local government irrespective of their position.





## **Lynn Provost, Auditor General**

Lynn gave us a brief insight into the operation of the Office of the Auditor General in respect of Local Government.

Primarily her office looks into the processes:

- the performance
- the authority
- the prudence,
- the probity
- the accountability

of decision making and decisions taken by Local Authorities.

This includes the Long Term Plans (ex LTCCP's) in respect of informed input and the management of assets.

The Office of the Auditor General has the power to enquire into:

- Conflicts of interests
- Local Authorities (Members Interests) Act
- Fraud survey. The Office is currently investigating the topic of fraud in the public sector in recessionary times.
- Severance payments to staff
- Sensitive expenditure

The Office does not enquire into the Private Sector, only the Public Sector.

She stressed that the office is primarily investigating systemic failures in the public sector

## **Penny Hulse, Deputy Mayor Auckland**

Penny spoke because Len Brown, the Mayor of Auckland, could not attend. It was clear that things are not all rosy. Auckland Council is now the biggest city in the Southern hemisphere and is having huge teething troubles.

It has:

- \$100B in operating revenue and expenditure.
- \$30B probable capital expenditure over the next ten years.
- 70% of its assets in Council Controlled Organisations (CCO's).
- confusion over mandates
- one elected member who was elected to three Local Boards (how can this be local representation).
- debate over shared decisions versus joint decisions.
- indecision in respect of who deals with what resulting in a lack of public engagement.
- planning, planning and more planning rather than doing, doing and more doing.
- frustration where a Local Board is proactive and Council Officers who take up the slack and do things when a Local Board is not proactive.

The CCO's have issues arising from the shared level of governance as there are often conflicting "wants". They effectively have two masters who at times have differing agenda and very differing views on a given subject.

We believe that time will tell on whether it will all come together and work as anticipated.

It is our view, irrespective of the current Cabinet paper that further tampering of the Local Government sector should be put on hold until the Auckland model is seen to work, or long enough for lessons to be learnt if it does not.

## **Peter McKinlay, AUT University**

There's ongoing angst in New Zealand about low voter turnout, but that's just a reality we have to face.

Greater community engagement means more and smaller units at the local level, tasked to make the important local decisions and to help build a consensus for larger decisions.

Let people in communities make their own choices. Councils should see community boards as a benefit, not as a cost. Councils should not have to pay for community boards out of their own pool.

Central government doesn't have a high regard for local government. Does it follow that local government doesn't have a high regard for community boards?

## **Marcus Akuhata-Brown**

Marcus gave an interesting, albeit rambling, talk about his life. He is a young man who could easily become a school drop out and a burden to society. He did not. With the right teachers, increasing his self confidence he became an international youth representative at multilateral meetings and at Commonwealth youth levels.

While we found his talk interesting there was in reality nothing that we could take from it that would fit the Tawa Board.

The one point to note was his view that the internet is affecting communication. There is minimal communication horizontally or vertically (inter generational).

His one important quotation was “unless I can listen to the dreams of the old people I am unable to see the visions of the young”.

## **Lawrence Yule, Mayor of Hastings and President of Local Government NZ**

Lawrence Yule talked about the “changing face of community governance” and “getting things done”.

The community continues to have greater and greater expectations. However the reality is that despite how good a given cause is, people don't want to pay a rates increase above the rate of inflation.

Community board members are responsible for representing the views of their community. Community boards enable small and distinct communities to have a voice.

The question was asked as to whether we have to wait for a natural disaster for a community to pull together? Presumably not, but that's often what happens.

Local Government is the closest form of government to the people. We do make a difference.

## **SEMINARS**

### **Empowering Communities During a Civil Defence Emergency**

*Adrienne Staples, Mayor of South Wairarapa*

We did not believe that the title actually related to the content of the session. Instead of discussing ideas of how to empower the community in a Civil Emergency we were asked to think of what was an emergency, split into groups and asked how we thought elected members should react in a civil emergency and what actions would need doing.

There was confusion over whether the actions related to events prior to an event, during an event or after an event.

What did come out of the session is the distrust between the various EMO's and Community Boards. In Christchurch many Boards were told by the EMO that they were not welcome at the very centres that they had established.

It was a good session but not for the reason given in the topic as in reality we never did discuss how to empower the community.

### **Legal Issues Affecting Community Boards**

*Mike Reid, Manager Governance, LGNZ*

*Brookfield Lawyers*

Most of the session consisted of a written quiz on the legislative rights of Community Boards, how they can be established and how many can be on them.

Discussion took place on what they can do and generally the consensus was that Community Boards are good for raising local issues and advocating on those issues but do not have the ability to make councils listen to them.

We felt that the session really only covered the tip of the iceberg and probably reflects that this is a complex topic where one and a half hours is never going to be enough.

## Effective Relationships between Councils and Boards

*Jenny Rowen, Mayor of Kapiti Coast*

An excellent session which covered not only Councils and Boards but Councils and EMO's.

Kapiti is very pro Community Boards. Board Members attend all workshops, Committees and are permitted in public excluded sessions. Many Councils also had this enlightened attitude to Community Boards. It is sad that a number of councils, including Wellington City, are not so enlightened.

We suspect that the enlightened councils are those who have multiple community boards and mayors who have come from community boards.

There are moves afoot to remove Community Board members fees from the salary pool. Some feel this creates a them and us mentality as Councillors see Community Board members as impacting on the salary that they could have earned.

There are lessons to be learned from the Canterbury Earthquakes. There needs to be a structure that recognises the value of local input at the local level. We were told that the Ministry of Civil Defence had apologised to many in Christchurch for its failure to recognise and make use of local knowledge, particularly Community Boards.

Jenny Rowan, as head of the Mayoral task force on Emergency Management would like to see more coordination between Community Boards and EMO's.

As a study we looked at Kapiti's interaction with Community Boards and I compare this to Wellington.

Kapiti	Wellington
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Senior Council Managers assigned to all Boards &amp; report back to the CEO.</li></ul>	Similar. Does the Senior Officer report back to our CEO?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Councillors delegated back to Boards.</li></ul>	Similar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chairs of Boards attend Council meetings – they have speaking but not voting rights.</li></ul>	Our Chairs only attend when invited and only if it involves the Board area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boards have delegated authority. and I am not sure if Kapiti does</li></ul>	We have no written delegations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mayor attends all Community Board meetings.</li></ul>	Our Mayor does not and we appreciate that Wellington City is very different to Kapiti in a number of areas.

Kapiti sees the Community Boards as:

- The eyes and ears of individual communities.
- Fostering democracy.
- Enhancing identity through local heritage, geography and social connections.
- Providing more community resilience and support than the corporate Auckland Super City Model (particularly in an emergency).

Sadly we do not believe that Wellington City sees Community Boards as other than something they need to tolerate without fully endorsing. We need to work with the Wellington City Council Officers and Councillors to:

- Establish why this is, and
- Correct what it is that creates this belief.

## **Local Boards & Exploring Best Practice in Local Government** *David Wilson and Peter McKinlay (Auckland University of Technology)*

This followed on from the plenary that they ran.

Participants were asked, in groups, to design a structure that worked with all groups and covered all of the areas that the group believed a Local Authority should look after.

In reality it turned into a discussion on pet likes and dislikes and nothing meaningful came out of it.

It was akin to the issue of what comprises a council's core activities as raised by Hon Rodney Hide.

### **Aging Population**

*Graeme Ennor & Rick Mansell, Mokoia Community Association*

This was a very useful session on "Surfing the Ageing Tidal Wave".

It is projected that by 2051 there will be 1.14m people in NZ aged 65+, and at least 60% more elderly than children. However a majority are likely to continue in some form of employment after retirement, mostly by choice. Fewer than half are likely to retire completely at 65. Work provides meaning for baby boomers, "being involved and contributing". The reality is that there are high suicide rates amongst older males who feel they're no longer valued.

Where do community boards fit into all this? They need to take the above factors into account when making decisions for their communities. Around 60% of NZ baby boomers are likely to want to get involved in social and/or environmental causes, and they will keep themselves healthy for as long as possible.

Community boards can look at:

- playing a part in setting up fitness stations for older people around the community.
- encouraging Men's Sheds.
- providing opportunities for seniors to learn a foreign language. Doing so can delay the onset of dementia by 10 years.
- installing simple seating stops at different points. We were shown a picture of a simplistic one-person seat attached to a power pole.

There will be lots more active, older people around in the years to come. They will want to contribute to society. We need to make use of their talents and keep their needs in mind in planning for the future.

"Harnessing and channelling their productivity and thirst for intellectual, emotional and physical adventure presents a greater challenge than counting the pension pennies they may not need."

## **Empowering New Community Board Members**

*Yvonne Palmer, former member of Community Board Executive*

This wasn't just for new members. It was just as applicable for more established members, especially those who have forgotten that one of their main roles as a board is to continuously engage with their community.

Community board members need to be constantly building relationships. We should make sure we have a good rapport with council staff with whom we deal. We should be asking ourselves "How can I build good networks to get good outcomes for my community?"

Community engagement:

- We should have a stall at the mall making contact with the locals. Have a "Guess how many jelly beans there are in the jar".
- We should be speaking at local school BOT meetings and asking "What do you see lacking in our community that we could do something about?"
- Liaise with the local Fire Service.
- Get involved in and promote Neighbourhood Support.
- Build a rapport with government agencies such as MSD and WINZ.
- Liaise with local MPs.

Have a link with community organisations, such as ...

- neighbourhood groups & residents associations
- clubs & service groups
- RSA & Grey Power
- youth groups, kindergartens and preschools
- Grey Power
- business associations. Send community board member to their meetings.

Again, it's all about good networking. Develop your own community board brochure to hand out. Do mailbox drops.

Many community board members put in more hours than what they're paid for because of their passion for the role. You need to explain to locals why their rates need to go up.

Visit other community boards and see how they operate.



