

Report Community Boards Conference, Gore April 22-25th April 2021



In attendance from Far North District Council: Adele Gardner, Jaqi Brown – Te Hiku Community Board, Mike Edmonds, Emma Davis - Kaikohe-Hokianga Community Board and Manuwai Wells, Belinda Ward, Frank Owen and Lane Ayre - Bay of Islands-Whangaroa Community Board.

The major conference themes were climate change, localism, Māori engagement, the future of local government. The report includes conference introductions for each speaker, whakaro/reflections from the attending board members and key questions highlighted in yellow.

Māori caucus breakfast

The conference started with a Māori caucus breakfast session attended by Members Jaqi Brown and Manuwai Wells. This was an opportunity to whakawhanaungatanga and discuss the matter of the day pertaining to Māori within local government.

Whakaaro/reflections: Discussions identified areas for improvement and growth in Local Government spaces across Aotearoa, centring around more meaningful engagement with whanau, hapū and iwi across the board (from the approach to decision making, delivery to the experience of outcomes). Majority of Māori elected members present noted poor diversity, adding that they were the only Māori voice on their boards/councils and often the youngest member attending (mid to late 40s).

Key patai/questions: If our Far North District Council and Community boards choose not to support Māori wards – what other pathways are we proposing/investing in to ensure meaningful participation and engagement with whanau, hapū and iwi? How else will we ensure Māori have an authentic voice that is heard in the Far North?

Key kupu: Lonely voices, Priorities, Pakeha

Speakers

Our collective home - Sophie Handford.

Sophie talked about her role as the founder of School Strike 4 Climate NZ and coordinated the movement alongside other youth during its first year in which 170,000 young people marched to highlight the Climate Crisis. She first got interested in climate change after a letter from council to her parents about sea level rises that could affect her home. This sparked a flame to find out more about what was causing the water to rise. She graduated from Kāpiti College in 2018 and has now gone on to become New Zealand's youngest elected Council member on the Kāpiti Coast District Council. As she is the Paekakariki - Raumati Ward Councillor, and also sits on the Paekakariki Community Board. She is determined to be able to say she has done everything in her power to create a more beautiful world for generations to come.

Whakaaro/reflections: Councillor Handford shared the whakapapa behind her journey to becoming an elected member for her Paekakariki communities- encouraging us to speak a legacy of acknowledgement, empowerment and love to our young people and for our environment. Enjoyed her insights into impacting change from the bottom up through the school strike 4 climate kaupapa – inspo for reclaiming our localism/Tino Rangatiratanga roots.

She had a team of 20+ volunteers supporting her campaign and is probably going to step down next term and mentor other people into local govt. Laid down a very clear challenge to act now for the planet.

A well prepared and presented session. Sophie is an inspiring young woman councillor. Her story is inspirational. Reinforced the need to ensure we encourage and support able young people to get involved in local government. However, given the time commitment required, combined with the low income payable to community board members, the ability for younger people with fulltime jobs to be involved as an elected community board member is difficult.

Key patai/questions: “What kind of ancestor will I be?”. Sophie asked us to consider this patai during her presentation. She was elected at 18, is now 20, and speaks with an awareness of someone much older. Hearing her words, challenged me to confront my own unconscious bias about young people becoming elected members – who am I to say they need my version of “experience, knowledge and skills” to be effective in this space. “What can you do for the collective good? How are Community Boards encouraging and supporting youth voice?”

Key kupu: Connection, Taiao, Vision, Intergenerational equity

From inconvenient truths to disastrous misconceptions – whistle blowing on the meaning of sustainability. – Ken Ross.

Ken’s presentation focussed on the world crisis where we in NZ are now consuming approximately 4 earths worth of resources every year. Ken talked about the history of climate change and that we are no longer sustainable as a planet. He discussed among other models the Doughnut economy whereby environment/nature is prioritised, then society, then the economy.

Whakaaro/reflections: Enjoyed Ken’s korero – nothing new to Māori, was interesting to see a lot of our Non-Māori attendees react to the confronting reality that we can’t keep screwing over Papatuanuku for money without consequences. Ken knows his audience well and brought home the practical and personal cost of internal disconnection. Very well researched and presented. The points Ken raised regarding the relative relationship between the economy, society, and the environment is a difficult one for community board members to influence in an effective way given the limited delegated authority that community boards have. He reflected on the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and how we are only now starting to take this seriously. His takeaway quote “we are carers of this planet”.

Key patai/questions: “Where are the mosquitoes? Where are the spiders?” Ken noted the demise of our eco-systems in simple, real ways. Do we care?

Ken’s challenges for the conference were “ What are we actively doing to ensure we are doing good for our environment? It is time for action. He quoted “You will find your purpose in life in selfless service to others”

Key kupu: Kuare, Western, Economy, Apathy

Ken Ross holds a double major B.Sc. in Zoology and Geography and an M.Sc. (Hons) in Behavioural Ecology. This eclectic mix of subjects has shaped him, somewhat intentionally, as a 'Human Ecologist'. Human Ecology (how humans live within their lands) has been the theme of Ken's life through careers in teaching, tertiary and adventure education and the maritime tourism industry. In 2005, when the Far North District Council was setting up a 'Community Development Department', Ken grasped an opportunity to work in Community Development in the highly variable and sometimes, truly isolated communities of the Far North, and his passion holds him in this role today. Ken has a deep understanding of the 'sustainability challenges' facing humanity, the impacts of the 1989 Local Government Amalgamations on the communities of the Far North, and a unique perspective on how to 'solve for pattern' to ameliorate these challenges. It is probable, that well before you heard the word 'Localism' or even before it was coined, Ken was working with Far North communities and helping them to create Community Plans, in which their aspirations for 'Tinorangatiratanga', 'Subsidiarity' and higher levels of self-determination and community governance were being discussed and written into their respective Community Plans.

Hokonui Huanui - Lisa McKenzie

Lisa is a bubbly character, and passionate about shifting people towards their goals. The Hokonui Huanui project targets young people from 0-24, their whanau and caregivers. The Huanui is symbolic of a highway and the many on and off ramps we need. They look at early identification and responses, skills, and wellbeing, maximising resources and using navigators to navigate with health, social and employment services. It is a collaborative partnership with MSD, Police, Justice, Education, Health and the initiative started as a social sector trial, then morphed through a PGF grant and help from Health. They operate within an integration framework and have a job training hub for all the community.

Whakaaro/reflections: A well-presented passionate session. Lisa is very enthusiastic about the work she is doing, a real doer. Working collaboratively is the only way. Potential to copy and paste this model into Te Hiku as similar small-town issues. Potential for models like this to be adapted across the Far North District Council, to create synergy and better utilise resources. However, couldn't see how Community Boards can have significant role in this area, given their limitations currently.

Key patai/questions: Lisa's message to the conference was "How can communities be responsive and flexible to all who need support?"

Key kupu: Coordination, hope, collective outcomes for all

Lisa is currently employed as the Hokonui Huanui Lead. She has been involved in various socially focused community development initiatives in the Gore District over the last 20 years, including the establishment and development of the Community Networking Trust, developing policies and processes for the Youth Worker Trust, developing a model of service provision and delivery of the Family Innovations initiative, was the Gore District Social Sector Trial Lead and most recently supported the scoping, development and delivery of the Huanui project.

Lisa has worked at the coal face in the social sector with roles as a Youth Worker, Strengthening Families Coordinator, Field Worker, Family/Whānau Support Worker and as facilitator of various programmes. Working at the coal face, seeing common issues and opportunities for change drives her desire to be involved in community development, believing that often small adjustments to a system or process can have a significant positive impact. She is passionate about working collaboratively to maximise resource and get the best outcomes for individuals and the community.

Interconnected Communities through major disruptions and a returning CEO's lens - Jim Harland

Jim's presentation was on some of the major "disrupters" and reforms that are coming that will impact on your communities. He talked about the 3 waters, RMA changes, local government representation review, technology changes and the [Quality of Life](#) project.

Whakaaro/reflections: Interesting and stimulating. Jim is a clear supporter of the role community boards can have in their communities. Proposed reforms to local government will be potentially either positive or negative in setting the role of community boards in the future, and we need to be at the decision making table. Our combined Community Boards need to explore and make appropriate submissions to the Local Government reform process. Jim's presentation was interesting in terms of his recent roles with both local government and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. Although he did not labour the point, I felt his view that Governments ultimate aim is to do another "three waters reform" and remove roading from local government control is potentially imminent and what would this mean for local government

Patai/Questions: Are we aware of the impact of these changes and challenges? How does transport fit into this picture? Who do you need a strong relationship with and how do you make this happen?

Jim is the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Waimakariri District Council. Prior to this Jim was the Director Regional Relationships - Southern, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. He has been involved in a number of projects including chairing the Visiting Drivers Project, the Kaikoura Restoration Liaison Group and the Road Controlling Authority Forum and was a member of the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuilding Team Board. Jim led a Ministerial Road Maintenance Taskforce (2011-2012) and chairs the Road Efficiency Group which is responsible for implementing the findings. Before joining Waka Kotahi, Jim was Chief Executive of Dunedin City Council. This followed senior roles in local government and the private sector, specialising in strategic thinking, tourism, change management and leadership of complex projects. The World Health Organisation has used Jim's expertise in understanding and leading communities on several occasions to further their Healthy Cities Initiative.

Snapshot presentations

Snapshots of community projects from different boards. Playground and walking track in Otorohanga took the audience vote.

Whakaaro/reflections:

An interesting insight into some of the work being undertaken by various community boards around the country all delivered in 7 minutes each.

The Otorohanga story was a great tale of adversity, the whole project was funded through a fine for an environmental breach, the community rallied and with local donation made this extraordinary feature park happen. Many similar projects and challenges to those here in the Far-North. Pleased to note that the work of the Kerikeri Domain working group, for example, was more probably bigger and comprehensive than many of the projects highlighted.

Engaging Iwi - Matu-Taera Coleman-Clark.

Engaging Iwi is a challenge for most Councils and this presentation shed some light on how this could become a useful and productive process for all.

Whakaaro/reflections:

A useful and interesting session. One member noted that during dinner several people at his table were irritated by the presentation and in one case felt personally offended by the comments made

by presenters. This indicated that we still have a long way to go. Overall impression was that we need to listen and go out to Māori at the marae, whenua and be ongoing. Consultation is the end product – not the beginning!

Councils need to revise the terminology of roles we use when referring to Māori i.e. Māori Liaison officer. We do not Liaise with Māori, we engage.

Patai/questions:

How do we ensure Māori are engaged with effectively and in a way that is truly culturally appropriate and responsive. How do we ensure a continual korero?

Matu is an experienced teacher, kapa haka tutor and cultural advisor of Ngati Porou, Whakatohea and Te Arawa descent. Driven by his whanau and culture, he takes pride in providing the best information and knowledge as possible. As a Teacher/Cultural Advisor with Hokonui Rūnaka, his goals are to ignite the desire for Te Āo Māori and to help open closed doors for Rangatahi. Matu was also part of "Tuia", a rangatahi driven kaupapa for Rangatahi Māori, working with the Mayors' Taskforce. In addition to his primary jobs, he also sits as an orator for many marae and a composer for many schools in Southland.

Workshops: Safer communities. – Jayne McAllister & Saniya Thompson

Jayne is the new coordinator for Safe in the South, she was previously a community advisor for Emergency Management Southland where she was assisting communities in community response planning and community resilience. Jayne's involvement with community is not been limited to her work, volunteering in different community organisations across the years she is now the elected Southland Area Chairperson for New Zealand Red Cross.

Jayne is a born and bred Southlander living in the metropolis of Invercargill with husband Ewan and a nowadays empty nest and a full fridge.

Saniya is a Community Connections Librarian at the Invercargill City Libraries and formerly a coordinator of Safe in the South. She was a key player in gaining accreditation of Invercargill City, Southland District and Gore District as an International Safe Community. Prior to coming to NZ from Moscow in 2014 she worked as the Director of International Affairs for the Russian Kickboxing Federation; through these experiences she truly appreciated the importance of community development and the challenges and rewards of successful cross-cultural communication. Saniya believes that her passion for the community can influence positive change. One of the ways of driving a positive change is through dance - in 2015 Saniya co-founded a pole and aerial dance studio in Invercargill where you will often find her on pole or other aerial apparatus defying the laws of gravity.

Whakaaro/reflections:

This workshop was a bit disappointing, and the issues they have in the south pale in comparison to those in the north. One good idea was a free tool engraving workshop, where they etched in the owner's licence plate number.

LGNZ Update – Stuart Crosby

Stuart is the President of LGNZ since July 2020 and was the Vice President from July 2017 to July 2020. He represents Zone Two on National Council and is a Councillor for Bay of Plenty Regional Council. He has been an elected representative since 1986, serving as chairman on various committees, a period as Deputy Mayor and Mayor of Tauranga City Council. Stuart has a business background both in the electrical contracting and building industry. He now devotes all of his time to council and to the wider community.

Stuart spoke about the 4 pou of local government – socially, culturally, economically, environmentally, and how the inclusion of these signaled a new way forward. He talked of subsidiarity, finding the balance with the core services that are being centralised or have new ways of being implemented particularly water, roading and planning. There may be opportunities to collaborate with other government departments and grow initiatives like Mayors Taskforce for Jobs. Left this workshop feeling that perhaps government has a bigger agenda.

Essential that Community Boards feed into the review and reform of LGNZ. Considerations should be given to the other well beings, community boards are best placed to deliver on this. Remember that when it comes to the Three Waters, the ratepayers own the existing infrastructure and the ratepayers paid for it to be put there. How will the private water users of which there 90K in Aotearoa fit into the picture.

BEAD the change you want to see in the world – using creativity to impact the 17 biggest challenges of today - Bridget Williams.

Bridget is the enthusiastic founder of social enterprise, Bead & Proceed, (www.beadandproceed.com) which exists to educate people about the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and inspires action towards them through creativity. She talked about the Agenda 2030 and how each of us needs a plan of action.

Her passion for sustainability and using creativity as a tool for innovation has made her recognised SDGs expert, assisting businesses and organisations with SDG strategic alignment and target reporting. She employs these skills to help businesses make authentic sustainable change and is renowned for her energy and enthusiasm, ensuing all staff and clients are taken on an SDG journey. As a former solicitor, Bridget thrives solving complex problems and practicing effective leadership in her governance roles. This includes being Deputy Chair of the Fendalton/Waimairi/Harewood Community Board and Trustee of the Christchurch Arts Festival.

Bridget is also Curator of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers Christchurch Hub and member of the Asia New Zealand Foundation Leadership Network, which has led her to become a creditable global change maker. Her efforts have been recognised and endorsed by the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark and the JCI Osaka Outstanding Young Person's Programme.

Both her and Ken Ross talked about the book 'The Limits to Growth' from the 1970's which talked about the current situation of a finite planet.

Whakaaro/Reflections:

A hugely passionate young lady. A very very competent presentation. Complemented Ken's presentation very well. Again, an area that it is difficult for community boards to influence in a significant way. Common Bead themes were wai kai and equity, only downside was that the beads were manufactured in India (where's the kiwi beads?).

The 17 biggest Challenges of today presented by Bridget Williams was inspirational. She asked every person to select 5 of the 17 UN goals listed below and work on these personally, embedding them into our lives for a more sustainable, caring future.

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health & Well Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water & Sanitation
7. Affordable & Clean Energy
8. Decent Work & Economic Growth

9. Industry Innovation & Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and production
13. Climate Action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace Justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

As a Council, if we could think of all of the above when decisions are being made this may have good outcomes for the communities that we serve.

Nga patai/questions: Her big question for the conference – “How do we get sustainable development to the forefront”. “How do we achieve the 5 P’s People – Planet – Prosperity – Partnership – Peace” and “Leave no one behind”

Localism – Malcolm Alexander.

Malcolm was CEO of LGNZ from 2012 to 2020 and before that had a career in the energy sector and the law. During his time LGNZ’s position on localism was developed which advocated for the empowerment of democracy at a local level through the transfer of functions and funding from central government to local government. Since his departure local government has experienced several governance crises, culminating, in the case of Tauranga City Council, with the removal of elected members. Elsewhere around New Zealand, many ratepayers are being faced with the prospect of double-digit rate increases at a time when incomes are stagnant and housing costs move beyond the reach of first home buyers. In such a world, is localism still relevant?

Whakaaro/Reflections:

A useful and thought-provoking presentation. Malcolm talked about then waning support for localism across the board, and this is becoming more evident with the introduction of 3 waters. He recommended that everyone needs to read the executive summary of the RMA reform as this encapsulate where NZ is going. He argued for local delivery having less impact on environment.

Again the theme of more centralisation of local government being the Government’s desired direction came through loud and clear. Felt that as a council we need to develop our thoughts on the reform process and ensure these are fed into the reform discussions.

Local Government Reform – Mike Reid.

Mike has been employed at LGNZ since 1996 during which time he has worked in a diverse range of policy areas including local governance, elected member development, legislative change, social policy, relationships with Māori and local democracy. Mike completed his PhD in public policy in 2011 and is currently on the board of the Institute of Governance and Policy Studies. He speaks regularly on local government matters and has published widely.

This session was to large extent hi-jacked by the Minister’s speech on the Friday morning announcing the reforms and the appointment of the advisory committee. It was attended by the LGNZ chair who also spoke. Strong feeling that local government has a fight on its hands to remain relevant and effective. I personally felt that LGNZ has one huge task in front of it, and that we as a council must be actively involved in that fight if we wish to remain a major force in our community.

Supporting small businesses to survive and thrive. – Sarah Collard.

Sarah is the founder of the largest Facebook Group in New Zealand, Choice (formerly New Zealand Made Products) and the co-founder and Managing Director of the e-commerce version

chooice.co.nz. She has extensive knowledge and experience in youth participation, local government, and project & event management.

Sarah is a former elected member of the Manurewa Local Board, elected to Auckland Council when she was 20 years old and the Manager for Auckland Youth Voice, Auckland's leading network for Youth Participation. She is also a Duffy Book Role Model for low decile schools, a Board member for the YWCA Auckland and a Board member for the Open Government Expert Advisory Panel with the Public Service Commission. Sarah is a two-time Kiwibank Local Hero Medal Recipient.

Whakaaro/Reflections:

Was interesting to hear about the creation and evolution of Chooice during Lockdown level 4 to now in level 1. Having bought several items from businesses listed on Chooice, I already had some working knowledge of its value for providing lifelines for a range of small businesses across Aotearoa. Chooice innovated a socially distanced online market space that allowed small grass roots businesses (many dealing with cash only transactions) to elevate to an online platform during shifting Covid levels and regulations regarding essential items.

Sarah mostly talked about her business. Diverted a little away from her theme “**Supporting small businesses to survive and thrive**”. This is an area we as a council could be, and should be, very actively involved in. Her presentation was very passionate and very well presented.

Nga patai/Questions: For many, Chooice provided the only means for whanau to access home grown bulk solutions to sanitiser and masks when they weren't readily available in local supermarkets. Chooice also enabled a social space to celebrate our unique identity and ingenuity here in Aotearoa – uplifting the spirits of its members(500,000+) and making the choice to support small, support local – personal. **How do we continue to support and grow socially connected online opportunities in the future?**

Key kupu: Innovation, Digital Self-determination, Response, Stability

Taste of Gore – Jim Geddes

Jim is currently the Head of the Arts and Heritage Department of Gore District Council. He headed the development of the Hokonui Heritage Centre in Gore and was instrumental in establishing the Eastern Southland Gallery, which in 2003 underwent a major redevelopment, with a new wing added to house the John Money and Ralph Hotere Collections. Currently he is working on the planning of a major expansion to Gore's *Arts & Heritage Precinct*, and (thanks to a generous gift from Auckland's Muka Studios), the establishment of a professional lithographic studio and artist-in-residence facilities in an historic former church.

Very interesting, a lovely insight into Gore and the surrounding Hokonui district, the maunga, awa and whenua. Demonstrated what a relatively small local authority can achieve in the arts. Could do with a bit of his energy in the Far North, and a coordinated multi-platform approach.

Summary

An enjoyable informative and relevant conference interspersed with the LGNZ announcement made for a politically interesting few day. Was useful meeting and talking to other community board members. Many shared the frustrations' we have and which we are addressing through our combined community board working party.

Some concern with the current Government's intention on local government reform. Three waters, fluoridation, changes to the RMA, roading reforms, Māori wards controversy, and the abolition of DHBs are all examples of government's lack of confidence in, and commitment to, local democracy.

Grew a renewed appreciation for our own council, and empathy for the struggles that others have that we don't. Learned a lot about how other community boards run their meetings, grant funding applications, set up their agendas and manage their external communications and social media accounts. For example, Bay of Islands – Whangaroa ward, community board members do not have admin access to our own Facebook page. When we have asked for access (so we can post panui, updates, photos and news of our achievements etc) council staff tell us that they are the only ones who can update/manage our community board face book page. It was interesting then to find that different community boards around Aotearoa manage their own social media pages themselves- with one elected member taking on the responsibility of posting updates to Facebook etc with all other members then sharing that update onto their individual community/subdivision pages. Simple, direct, consistent, and clear messaging – determined by the board, not staff.

At all levels, this conference was about partnership – the impact of its presence and absence. We heard every speaker talk about partnership, particularly with Māori. When I spoke with other elected members from around Aotearoa, they shared their own council's struggles and successes when they engaged or did not engage with Māori. There was an overwhelming acceptance that we cannot do what we have always done. The time for change has come. Local government is a pakeha dominant space entrenched in pakeha norms, behaviours, and aspirations. We left with a renewed hope that pakeha will continue to embrace Māori participation and partnership on whanau, hapū and iwi's terms – unhindered by Pakeha projections (however well-meaning or intentioned). Our Treaty partners may need to practice stepping back from their world view to allow space for Māori norms, behaviours and aspirations within local government. An important opportunity to build awareness, tolerance, and practice of peace.

Accommodation was lovely and warm, but very far from the venue, and this could have been logistical nightmare, but our hosts were very accommodating. The kai was great, the local Taste of Gore event was exceptional, who knew they knew how to cook paua perfectly.

All in all, a useful, informative 3 days in lovely Gore.