

## **RESEARCH MONOGRAPH SERIES**

### **PAPER NO. 9**

New Ways of Working with Our Communities

*Six Case Studies in Community Governance*

Prepared for *Local Government New Zealand* by

Chris Daly and Ingrid van Aalst

PS Services

February 2001

Contents

#### ***Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)***

*Rotorua District Council*

#### ***A System of Representation – Community Boards and Community Development Area Committees***

*Southland District Council*

#### ***The Wairoa Development Taskforce***

*Wairoa District Council*

#### ***The Children's Strategy***

*Christchurch City Council*

#### ***Four Circles for Health***

*Porirua City Council*

#### ***Participatory Appraisal***

*Environment Waikato*

Foreword

How can local authorities enhance the effectiveness of local governance? How can they provide leadership, infrastructure and processes that will empower their communities and facilitate stronger, more inclusive relationships and decision making?

This monograph, the eighth in *Local Government New Zealand's* research series started in 1994, provides case studies from six councils. Collectively, the case studies demonstrate the innovative and diverse approaches to community consultation, strategic planning, and information gathering and sharing which increasingly characterise modern local government.

Individually, each case study reflects a willingness to try a better way – a genuine desire to bridge gaps from the past through processes which recognise and respect the strength of diversity in communities. The commitment needed to plan, implement and adjust new projects – from both local authorities and the community – is also apparent as a key element in each model.

The case studies will be memorable for the genuine approach that pervades each of them. In their willingness to share their experiences in finding solutions to common issues in governance, the six councils have openly discussed their successes and mistakes in a spirit that focuses on learning and sharing.

These six case studies should be read (and enjoyed) as a 'snapshot' of good practice in local governance. There are many councils throughout the country which have or are developing equally valuable models of better ways of working with communities. Much of this learning has been made available to others, and I am sure this monograph will further boost the pool of shared knowledge which is enriching best practice in local government.

Basil Morrison

President, *Local Government New Zealand*

## Introduction

In recent years there has been considerable discussion and debate on the role of local government in providing leadership in meeting the needs of local communities, empowering them to decide upon and pursue those needs.

These six case studies describe different models of community governance and cooperation that have developed, the reasons they developed, the roles of local authorities in their development, the structures adopted and key processes that made them work, and the outcomes and lessons learned.

In some of the case studies councils have taken lead roles in addressing difficult social issues that don't have clear solutions and may cross agency and sector boundaries, requiring more holistic approaches if they are to be tackled effectively. In other case studies, the emphasis has been more on the nature of the partnerships local government has forged to help local communities articulate and realise their own goals.

The subjects of the case studies were initially identified by *Local Government New Zealand*, which has been integrally involved in promoting discussion about the role of local government and community governance, and is seen as having a good overview of developments in this area.

Chris Daly and Ingrid van Aalst, from PS Services, were contracted to carry out the studies. They contacted key people in each organisation and reviewed available published information, then conducted interviews with a range of people who were centrally involved with each initiative. The subject councils were diverse (ranging from large metropolitan to small district councils, and including a regional council). The themes of the case studies included partnerships between councils and communities, initiatives designed to identify and give effect to what the local communities wanted to achieve, and the empowerment of local communities in determining their own needs and futures.

As the project came together, the case studies defined a wide range of factors which contributed to the success of the initiatives, as well as a range of benefits to the councils and communities involved. However, common features emerged, as did benefits apart from the specific outcomes associated with each initiative. These included:

- improved relationships between councils and their communities...
- consequently, communities having greater confidence and more respect for councils, and enhancement of the councils' images
- a greater sense of community being built through the initiatives, as local participation occurred.

*Local Government New Zealand* would like to thank all the people who contributed to this monograph, giving time and showing a willingness to share information and insights into the projects they were involved in.

Mike Reid,

Strategy Leader, Governance,

*Local Government New Zealand.*

## **The Wairoa Development Taskforce**

### **Wairoa**

**Tatou e tika – nahau e tika ka ora nga reho A can do – does do community**

### **Introduction and Background**

The Wairoa Development Taskforce (WDT) is a forum in which community, business,

government (central and local) and other agencies co-operatively work and plan for the future of

the Wairoa District. It is a model of community involvement in the community's social, economic and environmental development.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1996, the Wairoa District Council, through the Mayor Derek Fox, and the Kahungunu Executive recognised that Wairoa had to do something to address its future social

and economic development needs. They invited over 500 representatives of Tangata Whenua,

community, business and central and local government to come together to consider a model of

economic development for Wairoa.

The imperative was driven by Wairoa's high long term unemployment rate; a below national average per capita income (\$10,000); a depressed business sector; the highest rate of those with

no formal qualifications (51%) among all 74 New Zealand local authorities; many diverse communities, from rural to small town/urban; and a population of 58% Maori. Wairoa also had,

however, a wealth of physical, cultural, environmental and people resources.

There were also a number of other issues troubling the community. These included a report on

the impact of a land use change from farming to forestry that had recently been released; the New Zealand Employment Service was proposing to run its service to Wairoa from Napier;

jobs

were being lost in the meat industry; and Housing Corporation properties were becoming run

down.

The Wairoa District Council and the Kahungunu Executive wanted to develop a strategy and

ways of working together, new relationships with government agencies, better sources and ways

of sharing information, a better image of Wairoa, more opportunities for their community and a

holistic way of looking at things. They also wanted to ensure that government agencies were delivering the services to Wairoa that they were supposed to be delivering.

### **... And so the Wairoa Development Taskforce was established**

From the public meeting the WDT was established, and groups of around 20 people from each

sector worked to put together a strategic plan, that was further developed by the Taskforce.

The key principles on which the WDT is based include a commitment to participatory involvement that is inclusive of the whole community, working together as equals in relation to

the issues. There is also a willingness for transparent information sharing, and to consider each

other's views and amend one's own priorities or plans where this becomes necessary.

<sup>1</sup> Material in this case study draws heavily on Local Employment Co-ordination, *Spotlight on Good Practice – A*

*compilation of case studies*, March 1999, which profiled the Wairoa Development Task Force.

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 2

The WDT is essentially a community forum for people to speak and air their views, find support and/or information to help further projects that benefited the community. It offers an opportunity for different people to get alongside each other to learn about respective plans and opportunities, and share advice, support and information. It brings together the key people who are needed to partner locals to make initiatives a success. The WDT does not own or directly run anything. It is mostly an initiator, facilitator, supporter, researcher, co-ordinator, advocate and sounding board from which initiatives spring and are owned by others.

Membership of, or involvement in, the WDT is fluid and changing as people come and go.

They

come seeking information or contacts and, having found out what they want, they move on.

The structure of the WDT is illustrated in the diagram below. Shortly after it commenced the

WDT Management Group was formed. It has about 11 members, including representatives from the Wairoa District Council, Waikaremoana Trust Board, Kahungunu Executive Committee, the Community Employment Mobile Information Service (CEMIS), chairs of each

action sub-group, the Wairoa District Council Maori Committee, Community Brokerage Organisations (delivering the Community Wage in Partnership with WINZ), business and geographic areas.

Representation is self-selecting, although the Council nominates two Councillors, and Maori groups or organisations decide who represents them. It guides the WDT process by structuring

the meetings, ensuring they are properly run, and arranging for different expert speakers to visit

and provide information on a range of different topics, as identified by the WDT. The

Management Group focuses on specific issues, facilitates action through various sub-groups and

the strategic plan, and reports back to the community. Sub-groups are formed by interested people and meet as needed.

Tangata whenua, community, business, government, agencies

Wairoa District Taskforce

Taskforce Management Group

Taskforce

Sub-groups

Government

Agencies

WDT Coordinators

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 3

The Management Group makes a limited range of decisions after the general direction is agreed.

Decisions that are taken include whether to provide an advocacy role on a particular issue; whether to support projects or applications for seeding finance for new ventures – interim funding to allow desirable projects to get off the ground while the appropriate funding sources (e.g. Government agencies) come on stream; and making submissions to the WDC and other agencies. Although it might appear to cut across existing organisational lines and processes, its collective nature allows it to advocate for the wider district to bring about change. WDT public meetings provide the forum for community consultation and strategic planning. Meetings are held regularly (monthly for the first 18 months of the Taskforce, but now every two months), and are a mechanism for community accountability. They ratify WDT Management Group decisions and discuss new initiatives.

There were some initial barriers to the development of the WDT. Early meetings of the WDT were somewhat unwieldy: lots of people wanted to have their say; there was a lot of vocal criticism of government agencies (which did not encourage their representatives to be involved); there was considerable debate about how representation could be achieved; there were different understandings about the purpose and role of the WDT; and different individuals had their own agendas in coming to the forum. The WDT was not, as some expected, an organisation for handing out funding to support projects – it was more about brokering relationships, networks and sharing of information. As the Management Group began to direct the meetings, and the key concepts were re-iterated, these processes settled down. The representation issue was dealt with simply by making the WDT an open forum – anyone could attend and have their say. There was initially a lack of communication between people, for which the WDT's commitment to transparent processes of information sharing, community consultation and decision-making has helped remove many concerns about this.

Another barrier has been a reluctance to get involved with big or new schemes, which is being addressed over time as communication and relationships develop, and with the provision of information, planning and support.

Significant changes within key government agencies (especially the merger of the NZ Employment Service, Income Support and Community Employment Group into WINZ) have also been disruptive, with changes in personnel and new ways of working that will take time to settle down and to develop new relationships.

Isolation and transport difficulties have also made it difficult for some people to participate in

some of the initiatives undertaken.

Interest in the WDT has waxed and waned, depending on people's needs. In many ways this is a

positive feature, and a normal part of the process, as people come, have their issues or information needs addressed, and go. It has meant, however, that the WDT has re-focused its

public meetings towards specific issues of interest – selecting a theme, inviting relevant expert

speakers and having people attending who have a particular interest in that issue.

### **Role of the Wairoa District Council**

The WDC's support for the WDT is fundamental to its success. It began as an initiating partner,

facilitating the process and hosting the meetings by inviting the key people to come together.

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 4

The WDC was seen as having the mana in the community to support and host the WDT in this

way. The Mayor used his role and position to call together the key participants to get the ball rolling, which gave the early process impetus and credibility.

The WDC continues to support the WDT by providing office facilities and employing the WDC

Co-ordinator whose role it is to carry out a range of tasks associated with the WDT. These range

from facilitating planning meetings, researching and providing information and or access to it,

economic development work with groups and Marae, developing new networks, supporting and

developing opportunities for new initiatives, monitoring WDT progress, organising meetings and

workshops, and so on.

Apart from this the WDC has a very hands-off relationship with the WDT. The WDT does not

formally report to the WDC, except for reports in the nature of "please note what we're doing".

This hands-off approach has been a conscious strategy that has worked well. If the WDC had

taken a more controlling role it is considered that the WDT would not have survived.

The budget for the WDT is set by the WDT Co-ordinator and the District Manager, and is agreed by the Council. Other funding is applied for from the various funding organisations, supported by a fully formulated plan, and is managed by a nominated or newly formed organisation.

The WDC recognises the WDT and nominates two Councillors to be members of the Management Group. It regards the WDT as an important community forum, reflecting all sectors, which can progress the district economically, socially and environmentally, and can promote a sense of belonging and participation.

The WDC has committed to continuing its support for the WDT in its ten-year financial plan,

and is of the view that the benefits derived from the WDT are 100% public benefits. The WDT

is, and will continue to be, fully funded from general rates.

### **Key Supporting Processes**

There are a number of critical processes that have been essential to the success of the WDT. From the outset time and effort has been invested into developing strategic planning skills and

processes. This includes talking about and demonstrating planning processes to people and groups, and encouraging their active participation. The use of relevant information and research

is also encouraged, and it has invested in several research projects and investigations to inform its

strategic planning and decision-making processes.

A rigorous decision-making process is followed, always asking:

- What's happening now (both in fact and in perception)?
- What change is needed and why?
- Who should be involved?
- Who should lead the process?
- Does this fit our objectives and mandate?

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 5

### **Selected achievements**

- New employment and training generated in the forestry, horticultural and meat industries.
- Seeding finance made available for subsidising employment.
- Recycling project in conjunction with the Wairoa District Council is a new service, providing new jobs and savings for business.
- Access to training secured through agreement for free transport to Tairāwhiti Polytechnic in Gisborne.
- Partnerships with Skill New Zealand (formerly ETSA) to introduce Skill Wairoa.
- Youth Resource Centre and Youth Co-ordinator position established.
- \$642,430 of central government funding secured for local projects, apart from subsidised wage projects.
- Educational needs research support Wairoa's case to establish an alternative school in Wairoa.
- An Economic Development Training Forum, involving national and international economic development specialists, was secured for Wairoa. This assisted with the assessment of Wairoa's development potential and strategic planning.

The WDT works with an external facilitator at regular six-monthly intervals to review its progress

on its strategic plan. This involves looking at what is happening and how, roles and

responsibilities. It is also an opportunity to re-visit and update the strategic plan, and refine or develop new goals and objectives.

The involvement of the community, and key people and agencies operating in the Wairoa community has been critical. These people have brought together a good broad knowledge of

the community, and have complementary skills. The community has been asked to participate

and has responded, with people attending meetings because they want to, rather than because

they feel obliged to. A “safe environment” has been created where people that wouldn’t normally be heard, from all walks of life, could come together, speak and be heard.

A transparent system of reporting has been established. Sub-groups provide written monthly reports to the Taskforce Management Group. This information is publicly available, and the Taskforce Management Group reports to and consults with the community via the bi-monthly

public meetings. All meetings of the Taskforce Management Group are open to the public and

media.

Communication and promotion is enhanced by an open policy with the local media, and media

coverage plays an important part of both the Taskforce meeting and WDT initiatives generally.

A positive relationship has been developed with the local newspaper, the *Wairoa Star*, which seeks

to publish local success stories that help build a positive image of Wairoa. The District Council

initially produced a newsletter called “Good News Wairoa” which presented information about

community events, employment related services and news, and updates on WDT progress with

various initiatives and achievements. Now, however, the *Wairoa Star* publishes a column after

each meeting of the WDT.

### **What are the benefits?**

Benefits that can be directly attributed to the WDT are often difficult to quantify, as other people often own the outcomes. A number of specific achievements (see inset) can be recognised,

however, and as well there have been a number of general benefits arising from the work of the WDT.

New skills - the WDT model has been a vehicle for the skill development of individuals and groups involved, and has provided a base for local strategic planning and action. This is evident with several Marae developments that have taken place.

Participation and involvement - the community is

more involved and vocal. People have learned to influence Council decision and policy making. A sense of social responsibility is developing. The WDT is also regarded as a catalyst for planning, support and action.

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 6

Relationships - Positive co-operative working relationships have been developed between diverse groups and people, as community planning and decision-making has occurred. These have included those relationships between government agencies and the community, as trust has been established. The WDT provides a forum where partnerships can be built to address local issues.

Positive image - Regular media coverage and public information sharing of “good news” is contributing to an improved community identity and culture. In addition, the WDC has benefited in that it has been drawn closer to the community, with the community having an opportunity to see Councillors and Council staff actively involved and participating in the community, and it is being seen as a resource that can be used.

Lobbying - A unified community presents itself as a powerful vehicle for lobbying on behalf of itself. One example of this was the WDT’s successful lobbying of the Minister of Education to support the establishment of an alternative school in Wairoa.

Greater focus on Wairoa – The WDT has helped to focus all government agencies responsible for delivering services in the Wairoa District on Wairoa, getting them together and talking to each other. This has improved co-ordination, understanding and relationships.

### **Key ingredients for success**

Those involved in the WDT have identified several key ingredients that have been essential to the success of their model. These include:

- The identification, involvement and co-operation of key and influential stakeholders is vital, along with well-facilitated planning. The key people from the community – influential stakeholders, elders and kaumatua – must be involved or at least given the opportunity to be involved. As well, there needs to be a good understanding of the cultural and iwi relationships in the district.
- Communication and participation through bringing people together and encouraging them to talk and share information enabled other plans and initiatives to begin evolving. Regular monitoring of community interest and involvement, and responding to it will help maintain participation.
- Co-operation between different initiatives - from the local community and government - was practical both from a resource perspective and also as a demonstration of the co-operative approach to addressing local issues that was in keeping with the participatory model. In

particular, there was the incorporation of the government's local employment co-ordination strategy within the WDT structure and goals.

- Council support is essential to the success and functioning of the WDT. Support came from the Mayor, Councillors and the staff dedicated to the WDT, putting ideas and other plans into action. The WDC is seen as representing the whole District, and not just feathering its own nest – “nothing to gain but a better community”. Its role has been one of co-ordination, chairmanship of meetings, working with various groups as appropriate to the lead agencies in respective groups, and advocacy.

- Public consultation/accountability through the structure of the WDT and the reporting mechanisms served to demonstrate transparent communication and decision-making, and *Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 7

helped to build trust and reinforce the importance of community participation and ownership.

- The commitment and responsibility of individuals, groups, iwi, agencies, business and the community as a whole helped make the WDT work. People had a wide and valuable range of skills, knowledge and perspectives that they brought to the process and the tasks and roles they performed.

- There was a strong driver/champion of the process – a person with high energy, who could relate well to people, had strong views and a high level of commitment to getting the community to work together.

- Information and research is essential for informed planning and decision making in response to identified needs. Critical information must also be made available to the community. Examples for the WDT included demographic information and education needs research.

- Sustainability and commitment to a long-term view are important for a secure long-term future. There are few quick fixes. Careful and considered planning is essential. It means investing in research, developing appropriate education and skill pathways, using resources strategically and always keeping sight of the bigger picture. It is also important, however, that there be manageable goals to work towards. “Persistence is important and a preparedness to put up with the bad as well as the good” (Raupunga kaumatua Charlie King, Kahungunu Executive).

- The achievement of results and progress towards agreed goals are powerful factors for ongoing success, particularly when people are part of the process.

- Using the Mayor's office as a vehicle for calling all the people together and getting them talking lent the process credibility. Initial meetings were held in Council facilities, (in this case) considered to be neutral territory, with there being no axe to grind on the part of the Council.

- Resist imposing too much structure on the process; let it evolve and develop to meet the community's needs, not someone else's agenda. Much of the success was because local solutions were being found for local problems. Too often Wellington imposes a centrally conceived solution on local circumstances. There was a willingness, however, by different

government agencies to try to accommodate the way in which the WDT was set up.

### **It wasn't all plain sailing...**

There were frustrations experienced along the way with the establishment and functioning of the

WDT. From the Co-ordinator's perspective there is a need to constantly highlight and reinforce

the central concept and objectives of the Taskforce. From another key stakeholder involved early in the process there is some frustration that their initial idea for the role of the WDT has

not been adopted. Some members of the community have difficulty grasping the concept – they

thought the WDT would be provide funding for pet projects or that the WDT should take a more hands-on role in managing projects and leading the development and implementation of

ideas and initiatives.

Some members of government agencies, and of the community, were somewhat mistrustful of

the WDC and its role. Government agencies also appeared mistrustful of each other, and other

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 8

parties suspicious of how government agencies appeared to close ranks prior to meetings of the WDT.

Early meetings were felt by some to be a waste of time, as the initial interest blossomed and everyone wanted to have their say – debates seemingly went round in circles. It wasn't until the

Management Group “took control” of the meeting process that some participants got more involved and interested. Other members, however, recognised that it was important for people

who were interested to have their say and feel they were heard.

There was a need to continually reassure WDC local politicians and management that building

the community's capacity takes time, and that while there were few direct outputs that could be

measured from the WDT' process, the value in its role could be measured on other people's outputs.

### **Lessons to be learned**

It is important that the people involved from the Council be people and community oriented.

With an “organisation” in the nature of the WDT there will be few hard and fast measures of

accountability and impact, so an understanding of an preparedness to accept human and social

impacts as measures of success is required. Other key skills among people that need to be involved include a chairperson who is in tune with what's going on in the community and adequate community representation. People who know central government and/or business, and

have good networks of contacts, knowledge of where funding opportunities and information can

be found are also very useful.

Some members thought that monitoring of projects that WDT supported didn't happen well enough – that if the WDT supported a project then it should take responsibility, and those receiving the support had an obligation, to ensure benefits promised are delivered. The support

of the WDT for new ventures carries some influence and it is important to ensure it is not abused. Others felt that the WDT had no real authority to require such feedback and reporting,

however.

Roles, responsibilities and the boundaries of these need to be clearly defined, understood and

communicated from early on. In the initial stages, however, this has to be balanced with the need

to be flexible and allow people to have their say; imposing a process will not motivate people to

become involved and participate unless they feel some ownership of it. Associated with this is

the caution that one should avoid coming in with a clear plan – involve the community in the

planning to gain that ownership.

There cannot be enough communication about the role, achievements and successes that such an

organisation is involved in to maintain interest. Despite a seemingly well-structured communication process there is still a lack of understanding among some sections of the community about how the WDT operates, its role, how it has made an impact on the community, and what its goals for the future are.<sup>2</sup> Open communication from the outset is vital,

especially to allow concerns, suspicion and mistrust to be allayed.

<sup>2</sup> Based on comments in an impromptu survey conducted in conjunction with the Economic Development Forum

held in Wairoa in March 1999 by a participant (G Towler).

*Wairoa Development Taskforce*

Page 9

If there is a key person supporting and driving the process there needs to be some element of

succession planning. In this case, the main driver and champion of the WDT – one of the WDT

Co-ordinators who was involved from inception – has recently moved on to another organisation

in another district. It will be interesting to see if the model is sufficiently well-established – it has

been operating for almost four years now – to be self-sustaining, or whether it needs the degree

of commitment and input from a role such as that played by the WDT Co-ordinator to continue

the impetus. Among the main parties there are mixed views. Some say that it will be able to

sustain itself, while others believe it is timely to re-think where WDT is at, where it goes from here and whether its goals are able to continue to be achieved while it is set up as it is. While the model has been durable, thought needs to be given, perhaps, to what needs to be done in terms of setting up structures and processes to ensure that such an organisation can survive the departure of key personalities. Finally, there needs to be a clear purpose in setting up such a structure. It should not be done just because it's the trendy thing to do. Making it work will require a high degree of commitment and energy from a number of people.

**For further information** about the Wairoa Development Taskforce, contact:

Peter Freeman Ph (06) 839-7309

District Manager Email: peter@wairoadc.govt.nz

Wairoa District Council

PO Box 54

Wairoa

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their assistance and support in

preparing this case study:

Peter Freeman, Wairoa District Manager Mayor Derek Fox

Guy Taylor (WDT Co-ordinator) Judi Rendall (former WDT Co-ordinator)

Deputy Mayor Les Probert (Chair of WDT Management Group)

Ian Redshaw (Business representative on the WDT)

Mo Houkamo (Kahungunu Executive Trust) Hine Flood (REAP)

Kiwi Smith (Manager WINZ Office)

## **Christchurch City Council – The Children’s Strategy**

### **“A child friendly city”**

#### **Introduction and Background**

In February 1995, Mayor Vicki Buck outlined her vision for children and the need for an explicit strategy to Christchurch City Councillors. Ms Buck considered that children, and people caring for children, had needs distinct from other groups in the city, and that these needs were often overlooked in decisions made by the Christchurch City Council (CCC). Her vision was one of a “child friendly city” which embraced services provided

by the private sector as well as the Council, central government and non-profit organisations. It

would encompass the wide range of services provided, either directly or indirectly, in a harmonious, complementary role.

The Christchurch City Council’s Strategy for Children refers to initiatives undertaken by, or in

partnership with the CCC with the vision of a healthy, child friendly city. The strategy is both a vision for the future and a plan for action. It is implemented by the CCC Children's Advocate, the Mayor, Councillors, Community Boards and Council Officers in conjunction with the wider Christchurch community.

It recognised that children made up a significant and growing proportion of the Christchurch population – almost 20% were under 13 years of age at the 1991 census, and Statistics New Zealand estimated at least 21% of Christchurch citizens would be aged between 0 and 14 years by the year 2001. Despite their numbers, however, children cannot express their views by voting, they lack economic independence, and cannot routinely express their opinion in residents' surveys and other ways the Council has of assessing public opinion and evaluating performance.

As much of what CCC does impacts on children – parks, traffic engineering, streetworks, libraries, etc. – it decided it needed to find ways to hear children's views and perspectives on decisions relating to those issues. The CCC, therefore, agreed to undertake a large-scale research

project, the Children's Strategy Study, to provide a basis for the strategy.

### **Laying the Foundations: The Children's Strategy Study**

Following her report to the Council in 1995, the Mayor set up a Working Party to consider how

the Council might become more responsive to the needs of Christchurch children. The members of the Working Party included Councillors and Council Officers, and representatives

from the Mayor's Office and public libraries. They identified the main areas in which Council's current and potential role as a funder, provider or advocate for Christchurch children could be considered.<sup>1</sup>

The Working Party then participated in a workshop to develop the research brief, using a background report that outlined a demographic profile of Christchurch children and families,

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the strategy, the Working Party defined children as aged between 0-13 years.

*Christchurch City Council- The Children's Strategy*

Page 2

statistical trends, the ways Council provided or funded initiatives for children during 1995 and

questions to consider as a basis for discussion. At the workshop the Working Party identified the key stakeholders for the research and agreed on the parameters, goals and directions for the

research. They agreed the Children's Strategy Study needed to establish:

- How children experience the city
- What is important to children
- How parents and caregivers experience the city

- What is important to parents and caregivers
- Issues for providers and how they perceive the role(s) of the CCC.

Fieldwork for the Children's Strategy Study began in July 1995 and the research report was completed in January 1996. In December 1995, however, the Council made an important appointment: a Children's Advocate whose role was to understand and represent the interests of children, to implement recommendations arising from the study and develop strategic objectives.

The Study itself comprised three parts:

- A city-wide survey involving 892 children from 29 different schools
- A city-wide survey involving 94 parents, and
- Over 50 interviews with representatives from organisations which provide services to children in Christchurch.

#### *The children's survey*

A cross-section of primary and intermediate schools were approached to participate, including

two from each of twelve wards in Christchurch city, as well as private, integrated and alternative philosophy schools. They ranged from decile 1 or 2 to decile 9 or 10.<sup>2</sup>

Schools provided a unique opportunity to access a wide range of children and families.

However,

it is important that researchers who are both skilled in and sensitive to school and classroom environments are used. A skilled senior teacher was, therefore, employed to set up and facilitate

the classroom surveys.

School principals chose classes to participate in consultation with the facilitator, classroom teachers and the guidelines the Working Party provided. A letter was sent to principals outlining

the purpose of the study; the class time, age range and numbers of students required; the questions and methods that would be used; and the ways in which the results would be used. The letter also contained a response form to be returned to the facilitator and a letter to parents.

While the facilitator was in the classroom, children filled out all or part of a written survey questionnaire, depending on the time available, their age and ability. The facilitator also

<sup>2</sup>The Ministry of Education uses decile ratings to rank socio-economic status of New Zealand State or integrated

schools. Decile 1 is lowest and decile 10 is highest.

#### *Christchurch City Council- The Children's Strategy*

Page 3

employed techniques such as class discussions, questioning, brainstorming, map-making, and artwork to elicit children's responses.

All participating classes were sent a 'child-oriented' summary of the results, and schools were sent

a copy of the research report.

#### *The parents' survey*

The methods used to incorporate parents were not so successful and provided valuable lessons

for future consultations. It was difficult to get a representative sample, and the numbers

required, resulting in an overall low response rate. This was related to parents' participation in the paid workforce and the impact that "work" has on time for other things. In many cases it appeared parents felt too busy and pressured to participate. In particular, the timing of the research, and the time required to participate in the survey needed to be looked at. For example, research should not be conducted in the pre-Christmas rush, and should take less than 20 minutes. There may also need to be an incentive provided, to encourage parents'/caregivers' participation. The questionnaire that was developed for parents was designed as both a self-completion survey and to be administered by an interviewer. It was distributed using a snowball technique where the project co-ordinator visited parent groups and requested their participation and for them to encourage other friends and people to participate. The project co-ordinator also contacted schools to discuss with the principals the ways of getting the best return. In most cases a survey was sent home to parents with children. Reminders were posted on community noticeboards and by various local radio stations.

#### *Service providers*

The project co-ordinator and the Working Party initially drew up the sample of provider organisations to contact. It included the major health, safety, welfare, education, sport, recreation, restaurant and entertainment providers delivering a service or programme to children and families in Christchurch. Appointments were made for interviews with all but one of the 46 organisations identified. Information about the Strategy and Strategy Study, and the questions that would be asked were sent out in advance. A core set of questions were developed and covered with all providers. However, respondents were also given the freedom to discuss whatever issues the questions raised for them. As a result most interviews took between 1-1.5 hours to complete.

#### *In summary*

Overall, schools, students, parents and providers were positive about the opportunity to provide feedback and suggest improvements, as well as expressing their frustrations and concerns. Children were often sceptical at first, then appreciative, about the Council seeking their opinions. In most schools staff said, "what a good idea, can we do this again?" and provider groups requested ongoing dialogue with the Council. The research provided CCC staff, Community Boards and Councillors with a wealth of information that they could apply to their own various

areas of interest. There were many recommendations arising from the study about what the CCC could do to recognise and address the needs of children.

*Christchurch City Council- The Children's Strategy*

Page 4

### **Building on the Foundations**

Since these beginnings, the CCC Children's Advocate, senior management and key Councillors

have worked to ensure that consideration of children's issues and their perspectives can be integrated into the decision-making processes of CCC. The Children's Advocate, in particular,

has been very good at raising the profile of children's issues and promoting the acceptability of

“the children's perspective”.

There have been many initiatives undertaken to seek children's opinions and views about various

aspects of living in Christchurch. The CCC has also extended its efforts to engage the community and young people to the involvement of youth (described as aged from 13 to 25 years

of age). A few of these projects and initiatives are described. The role of the Council through these initiatives has been varied, ranging from initiator, funder, advocate, service provider, coordinator,

facilitator, partner, leader, and so on.

#### *The North West Youth Summit*

The North West Youth Summit was organised by an inter-sectoral group of people working with

youth in the North/West of Christchurch. This group included representatives from Police Youth Aid, a local High School, CCC, Te Kaupapa Whakaora, a shopping mall, a local church

and various local youth organisations. Its aim was to enable young people living or socialising in

this area to have input into the assessment of current youth services and facilities in the area, and

the planning of new services and facilities.

The event took the form of workshops and entertainment, and included the opportunity for participants to design the ideal youth facility. Sponsorship for the summit was by way of materials, time and financial support from a range of organisations – those represented on the

organising committee plus a number of other private sector organisations, including Hoyts, Fresh-up/Spritz, Digital Imaging and Baker Boys.

167 young people aged from 13 to 19 years participated in the summit and attended workshops

based on the areas of youth concern identified in the CCC's Youth Policy. There were six themes that resulted in ten one-hour workshops. Each participant was asked to pick two workshops to attend and each was repeated.

Skilled facilitators were used to elicit from each workshop what participants liked just as “it” is;

what things are basically OK, but need improving, and how would they improve it; and what are the gaps and the creative ideas participants had for filling these. They completed feedback sheets, which summarised the data collected, and a report of the key findings was prepared. The report acts as a discussion document for those people and organisations wishing to improve their service delivery to young people, those planning services or facilities for young people in the North/West of Christchurch and/or those advocating for improved services and facilities for young people.

<sup>3</sup> A provider of alternative education for students.

#### *Christchurch City Council- The Children's Strategy*

##### *Page 5*

It has been distributed to educational establishments, health providers, governmental agencies, retailers, CCC staff and service centres, youth organisations and community groups. The young people participating in the summit are able to access the report through their schools, training providers or the organisation that assisted their attendance.

#### *The Y7-10 Project*

“Year Seven to Ten”, or “Y7-10”, refers to the years of schooling commonly known as Form 1 to Form 4. Most students enter Year 7 (Form 1) at age 10 or 11 and exit Year 10 (Form 4) at age 14 or 15.

The CCC recognised that children in this age group have distinct needs and characteristics. They are in transition between childhood and adulthood, with rapidly changing growth and development phases often at very different rates for different individuals. Their attitudes are also changing fast as they grow and develop socially and mentally. The CCC wanted to understand the special needs of this group of children in order to plan from an informed knowledge base.

The Y7-10 Project aimed to find out who is providing for children in this age group, and what needs to be done that is not being done at the moment. It was not so much a research project as a mapping and awareness raising exercise.

The project had three main parts. First a literature search was undertaken to find relevant information on Y7-10s.

The second, and major part, was the Y7-10 Survey. This was sent to over 120 providers of services to children in the Christchurch area. Respondents were asked to describe their service,

including when and where it was provided and to indicate the nature of the service. They were

also asked three open-ended questions:

- What are the main struggles you have encountered in providing for Y7-10s?
- What would help your organisation provide a better service for Y7-10s?
- Are you aware of any gaps in service provision for Y7-10s?

The Y7-10 Survey provided an indication of where service for Y7-10s in Christchurch is “at”. It

was not exhaustive, due to a number of non-responses, and because the Y7-10 Working Party

may not have been aware of all providers at the time the survey was conducted.

The final part of the project was the Y7-10 video “*Tweenagers*”. While the survey contains the

views of providers, the video is based on a series of interviews and focus groups with children

themselves, providing useful information on their perspectives and experiences. The video is for

use in conjunction with the survey findings to give a rounded picture of “where things are at” for

Y7-10s.

An awareness-raising seminar and workshop was held with elected members and staff to present

the results of the study, and a report summarises the main themes that came out of the survey –

the issues, insights and ideas – and highlights the relevant literature available on Y7-10s. It provides a useful starting point from which further action or research can be undertaken.

*Christchurch City Council- The Children’s Strategy*

Page 6

### **What’s the Big Idea? (March – October 1999)**

“*What’s the Big Idea?*” is a project devised by the CCC to encourage Christchurch school children

to find creative ways to strengthen their community. It was aimed particularly at intermediate aged school children, in Years 7 and 8 (Forms 1 and 2). Children were asked to come up with

one big idea to make their part of the city a better place.

A Teacher Resource Kit was prepared for use in the classroom. The resource material provided

information to stimulate and assist on processes for each of four stages of progressing the project: (i) brainstorming ideas; (ii) selecting the best idea; (iii) researching and developing the

selected idea; and (iv) preparing a presentation which explains why the idea is so good. In addition, practical guidance was available from Council staff, particularly in the research and development of ideas.

Some examples of the children’s creativity, research and problem solving included:

- Solutions to the issue of a lack of safe discos in an area.
- A “Jobline” – for “tweenagers” faced with the problem of what to do if they’ve got no cash, everything costs big-time and a job is needed.

- A voucher system and other ideas for discounted recreation opportunities for tweentagers – based on research with parents, tweentagers and the wider community.
- Persuading a landscape architect to run a free workshop for an enthusiastic group of intermediate children, looking at a local park and coming up with some creative solutions to enable it to be used by more people in their community. They drew up plans, made a model, researched traffic issues, and even put a questionnaire in the local tavern!
- Improving the appearance and environment of a local cemetery.
- “The school as a community resource” – an urban renewal project which has involved interplay between community and school, play and learning. They’ve looked at stream enhancement and habitat development, all part of a project focusing on the whole school’s recreational development for community use.
- A BIG Breakfast, incorporating ideas on addressing local social issues.
- Options for wider use of a local park by the community – youth, families, and children.
- A “Drop-in Centre for Youth”.
- Traffic congestion outside schools – research and problem solving has been extended into the wider community, resulting in a pamphlet being designed for distribution and combating this problem of traffic outside schools.

The children’s BIG ideas have been presented to their respective Community Boards, who have been impressed by the effort and maturity put into the proposals. All projects are being followed up on, in each area.

*What’s the Big Idea?* has produced very interesting and exciting examples of what can happen when children begin to focus on issues in their neighbourhood. They have put a lot of time, energy and creative thinking into research and developing cost effective, sustainable solutions. They *Christchurch City Council- The Children’s Strategy*

Page 7

have enlisted a lot of community support and have entered the political process. They have been warned that their ideas may not gain full support; there are such things to consider as budgets, time scales, priorities, practicalities and so on.

The project has been an educative tool to help children understand civil society, community development and what it takes to “Strengthen Communities”.

### **Other projects and initiatives**

As well as these, there have been a number of other projects and initiatives that have involved children, young people, other agencies and groups in the community to help address local issues.

They include:

- Holiday programmes – the CCC identified the needs of 10-14 year olds were not being met by school holiday programmes. Where such a gap is observed, the CCC will take the lead, looking for a partner in the community which has common goals, and initiating and funding a holiday programme. Once it becomes established, it is then opened up to be delivered by other service providers. The CCC will work with them to ensure they have the capacity and

capability to do the job, then will back out of direct involvement to more of a monitoring role. The programme then becomes a contracted service to the CCC.

- The Road Safety for Schools Steering Group provides liaison between the schools and traffic

engineers on road safety around schools. The group comprises LTSA, Police, a representative of school principals, CCC staff and Councillors. It has its own budget for urgent priority works that are identified, and ensures all the right people are listening to the issues of road safety for children and schools.

- CCC facilitates the development of relationships, networks and getting various parties talking

constructively together. For example, a Mall operator is talking with an adjacent high school about security issues, and converting a security guard role to more of a youth development focus at the Mall. The school wanted a curfew on students hanging out at the mall between 8.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. This was changed after input from students to 3.15 p.m. (the end of the school day). The Mall has also been encouraged by this process to set up a youth advisory committee. They will work in partnership with the local schools, youth community, Te Hou Ora, etc. to provide an effective safety net for local young people.

- Youth Recreation Needs Study – A project team was set up, involving a group of youth (including some of the “alienated” youth group segments), to develop the project brief, plan and the key factors of the study. Three focus groups of young people aged between 10-25 years and 620 interviews were held. They identified, among other things, that different groups had different recreation needs and requirements, which now can be factored into the design of recreation areas by CCC.

- A Fish ‘n’ Chip Shop owner identified that kids hanging out at a mall were bored, with nothing to do. He approached the CCC, suggesting he could provide a sports library in his shop. The CCC provided the sports gear and cabinet. The shop owner lets kids borrow equipment to play with outside. This is an example of a local business owner working with the CCC to meet an identified need.

*Christchurch City Council- The Children’s Strategy*

Page 8

- “Safe Routes to School” – a programme funded by CCC and targeted at primary and intermediate schools in Christchurch. It involves children identifying their routes to school, safety hazards, and safer routes for them to use as pedestrians and cyclists. It also involves the school community, and associated engineering and police road safety professionals. Associated with this is the “Walk a Child to School Day” – an annual event organised by the CCC to promote walking as a safe and healthy means of getting to and from school, reduce traffic congestion, and so on. It is supported by the Police Youth Education Service, the School Health Service, and sporting personalities from rugby and cricket. Forty-two primary schools took part in 1999. To encourage ongoing walking, “Walking School Buses” are also being promoted.

- The Water Link Project is an educational programme aimed at increasing children’s environmental awareness of the city’s water resource. It recognises that children will be the next generation who will be managing and using this important resource, and makes use of information technology to create different styles of learning. The 1998-99 programme included the development of a web site and on-line enquiries to the CCC Water Services Unit, audio conferences with expert authorities in different fields, a competition for students to show the learning they had gained about water and a drama production. It is being

expanded and incorporated into GlobalNet.2000, an initiative linking children globally via the World Wide Web.

### **Overall Outcomes and Benefits**

Quite apart from the separate and specific benefits of each project, there have been a number of positive benefits for the CCC and city.

There has been a lot of national and international interest in Christchurch, with it being difficult

to find any negative spin-offs from being known as the “child friendly city”. Christchurch is getting kudos from being seen as a pioneer in this area. It is a member of an international network of cities, “Cities of Tomorrow”, brought into being by the Bertelsmann Foundation of

Germany in 1995, with members recognised as being among the world’s most efficient local governments.<sup>4</sup>

In November 2000 Christchurch will be hosting GlobalNet.2000, a summit of children and leaders from around the world who are being encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas about

what the future holds, and identify particular issues, concerns, dreams and aspirations through

virtual forums in the months preceding the summit.

The children’s strategy has reinforced CCC’s strategic goals of democratic governance and community cohesion and wellbeing, and has highlighted that children have rights and needs too –

including a right to be heard.

<sup>4</sup>The goals of the “Cities of Tomorrow” network are the international exchange of experiences, transfer of knowhow

and mutual learning, with a major emphasis on improving local government. The current cycle of work for the network is concentrated on improving the living conditions of children and teenagers (and senior citizens) in

the city, with a common focus being strategic management, with strategic control of a local government being recognised as a key factor for successful city management.

*Christchurch City Council- The Children’s Strategy*

Page 9

The relationships between CCC, schools and other agencies working with children and young

people have improved. Agencies working with young people beginning to realise that CCC won’t

impose solutions and this is building up trust with them.

Many of the activities, such as involving young people in the designs of facilities and parks that

they use, have meant that they feel less isolated, disenfranchised and unvalued. They are being

educated in what local government does to provide its services and amenities, and helped to understand the processes of government, and how they can have an impact. This is leading to

the development of trust, and a belief that their opinions will be listened to and make a difference.

There is a developing a sense of community – people are developing solutions to issues

themselves, and taking greater ownership of them, than they would if solutions were imposed. A number of different community organisations are acting together in an integrated and coordinated way, seeing a commonality of objectives. The CCC's efforts are helping to establish that the CCC can be trusted, and is a part of the fabric of the community. Council staff working in the community are seen more as a resource for the community, than an "officer" of Council. This makes it easier to get things done, and do things better.

There have been some barriers and resistance to the process. Among some Councillors, there was initially some thought that this proposed focus on children was a "trendy" thing to do, and not relevant to CCC's core business. However, they got a lot of positive feedback from the community, including from the local business community who saw the relevance for attracting people with families to the city – and thus retaining/attracting skills, purchasing power and investment. The Police were also very appreciative, as they recognised and were supportive of the need for preventative programmes, but did not have the resources to provide them. There was some resistance to the proposed strategy, and to the role of Children's Advocate, whose job was to bring children's issues and perspectives to the fore, from among staff, which had most of its basis in issues of patch protection. This was broken down in the initial stages, by making a corporate directive that "children have to be considered by every unit". This was reinforced by the commitment of key leaders, including the Mayor, supported by the Community Services Committee and senior managers. Also, the Children's Advocate was appointed to the corporate office to give the role status and credibility. She established her own personal credibility by achieving small successes that appealed to people's interest – e.g. safety by design, demonstrated understanding of parks issues, etc.

### **Keys to Success**

A range of factors can be identified that have helped the CCC's strategy, and individual projects, work successfully. The CCC's reasons at the outset were right. Lots can be done to improve cities for children; this was an area of neglect and recognised as such. This approach has contributed to a sense of community service/social responsibility. There is, however, a need to have good service delivery

first (get the basics right). This helps establish credibility and, from there, it can be seen that the

Council can contribute to the community on the “softer” issues.

*Christchurch City Council- The Children’s Strategy*

Page 10

There was the recognition that children and young people do have a number of different interests

from the community at large. However, doing things that meet their needs are almost always good for the rest of the community too – e.g. traffic safety, safe parks, etc.

Having someone specifically focused on children’s issues – responsible for ensuring their issues

are given consideration when it comes to decision-making and with reasonable time to do the job

– was important.

There is a need to know the community, and the groups within it that are dealing with children

and young people. The CCC learned to respect where they were coming from, understand their

objectives and look for commonality of goals. It built on them, rather than replaced them, and

has focused on establishing good networks and relationships.

The CCC tackled children’s issues before youth issues – the child focus is not controversial, where as youth issues often are.

Other things that worked include:

- doing an adequate needs analysis at the outset, which involves talking to youth/children, is important – if it’s not right first time there is a risk of turning people off and wasting money/resources
- involving a range of people in the various projects – young people, youth workers, Police Youth Section, schools, private sector, CCC, church groups – also pays off
- holding meetings, etc., on the community’s ground – don’t always bring them into the Council (although sometimes this is seen as being “neutral” and advantageous to achieving outcomes), and
- not being too prescriptive – have a general framework but be flexible within it.

### **Learning points**

As well as lessons implicit from what worked well as described above, there are a number of other learning points from CCC’s experiences.

Communication is critical. People want to be asked for their input, to be listened to, and for their

input to be used. Communication needs to be regular and continuous throughout a process, to

keep the community informed of what’s happening, progress being made, etc. Ideally, ensure people are informed before the media informs them – it is important to create the right first impression. In one CCC experience a media story that was released before the community was

informed directly did not present a balanced view of the issues and created a higher level of resistance than would otherwise have occurred.

Getting the methods of consultation and planning right may be expensive at the front end, but it pays off in the long run. As well, there is a need to recognise and evaluate the social impacts of proposals and ideas. These processes should be seen as an investment that will avoid expensive mistakes. Be prepared to start with a clean sheet of paper rather than a proposed solution – if

*Christchurch City Council- The Children's Strategy*

Page 11

you have a problem go to the community and solve it with them. You can guide them and provide the technical expertise, but have to let go the reins of the process. The process of engagement is critical.

Don't assume you know what young people want – processes need to be driven by young people

and they have to want to do it. This means taking more time at the outset, but different and better ideas will come out. However, it needs to be fun, enjoyable and easy to participate; don't

be too prescriptive – keep the process flexible. Having said that, however, there is a risk of losing momentum and motivation if you get sidetracked from original goals.

Staff need proper training about what it means to seek community views – to better understand

the intent and “how to's”, or else there could be inconsistent results, and one person's mistake

could result in setbacks for the rest of the Council's initiatives. This means there is a requirement

for people with good facilitation and people skills out in the community. It also means that internal people need to be engaged in the processes of community involvement as well as external people – which may require a shift in culture and changes to “the ways things are done

around here”.

There needs to be an adequate level of funding, staff, and resources provided to support the processes created. If expectations are created then one needs to follow through on them, so be

careful about raising expectations unrealistically. Not delivering on raised expectations and hopes

will result in loss of motivation and trust. For example, in Christchurch, the “Big Ideas” need to

be followed up on, either with action on what is proposed or, if not appropriate to take action,

the reasons explained.

Schools need a more proactive approach to consultation – someone going out to them and hearing what their issues are, not just a letter/pamphlet through the mail; otherwise they are often too busy, and paper gets “bin-filed”.

Finally, be wary of getting into partnerships with groups that have fundamental philosophical

differences, as these have tended to fall apart.

**In conclusion...**

From its beginnings in 1995, the CCC's children's strategy has become increasingly integrated into the way CCC "does things". Understanding what children's and young people's issues are, and the perspectives they have are important to many of the decisions CCC makes. The best ways to find out what children and young people think is to ask them. Their ideas have often delighted and amazed, and their opinions to deserve to be respected.

**For further information, contact:**

Lyn Campbell Ph: (03) 379 1890

Children's Advocate Fax: (03) 371 1786

Christchurch City Council Email: lyn.campbell@ccc.govt.nz

PO Box 237

Christchurch

*Christchurch City Council- The Children's Strategy*

Page 12

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**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following Christchurch City Council staff for giving me their time and thoughts:

Lyn Campbell (Children's Advocate) Jonathon Fletcher (Director of Policy)

Lesley Symington Karon Theobald

Lee Kelly Bruce Meder

Paul McOscar Chris Fourie

Paul Cottam Chris Freeman

## **Porirua City – Four Circles for Health**

### **Introduction**

The submission of the Porirua City Health and Disability Report and Plan to the Minister of Health in September 2000 has been the latest joint community effort to improve the health of

Porirua City. It is the major output from the Healthlinks Project, a partnership involving representatives from Porirua city and the Kapiti Coast, including the Porirua City Council and

Kapiti Coast District Council, tangata whenua, pacific people, Ministry of Health and community health groups.

In early 1998, Four Circles brought together the three main community groups and the Porirua City Council (PCC). While each retained its identity and independence, the Four Circles served to define their respective roles vis-à-vis each other. It also captured the enthusiasm of the parties and became a rallying point for enhancing relationships between them. This case study highlights the evolution of Porirua's community participation in its efforts to address health issues of the city.

### **Background**

Porirua is located 20 minutes north of Wellington, and has a rich diversity of cultures, age groups and social and economic profiles. While the population of Porirua grew rapidly in the 1960s and early 1970s, this growth flattened out and the total population increased by just 700 persons between 1986 and 1996, reaching around 47,700 in 1998.

Compared to the wider Wellington region, Porirua City has higher percentages of Maori and Pacific populations, with these concentrated in some areas; non-European ethnic groups are moving towards 50% of the total population. The average household income was \$50,000 in 1996 but there was a wide spread, with over a quarter (27%) of households earning under \$30,000 a year; per capita income is below the average for the Wellington region and a large proportion of the population relies on income support. It has a younger population profile, and

unemployment is higher than national rates, and particularly so for Pacific and younger people.

The New Zealand Deprivation Index, an indicator of the disadvantage experienced by small areas

within the city and country, shows Porirua City has a population of extremes as the Figure below

illustrates.<sup>1</sup> In 1996, over half (53%) of the population fell into the "more deprived" categories,

while 40% were in "less deprived" categories.

Although unemployment remains relatively high, educational qualifications of residents are improving, and new opportunities are emerging. The number of businesses in Porirua increased

by 25% from 1995 to 1999, and there was a 6% increase in employment over the same period.

Many of the jobs in Porirua are in service sectors, with education accounting for 17% of the total,

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the "Porirua Health and Disability Report and Plan", 2000

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 2

health and community services 12%, and personal and other services 4%. A rapidly growing sector has been property and business services, now with almost 13% of all jobs.

### **Porirua population, by level of deprivation, 1996**

0  
2,000  
4,000  
6,000  
8,000  
10,000  
12,000

14,000  
16,000  
18,000  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### **NZ Deprivation Index**

Porirua has good educational, health and cultural facilities, which all contribute to Porirua's current strength and vitality.

In 1994, however, the picture was not so rosy. An assessment of health and disability support

service needs conducted by the Central Regional Health Authority (CRHA) raised some alarming

findings, which included:<sup>2</sup>

- Hospitalisation and mortality needs were worse than elsewhere for a broad range of conditions.
- Although health and disability support services in Porirua were similar to those in other communities, access was relatively poor.
- Barriers to access included cost, culture and language, knowledge, and a range of social and economic factors that affect health status.
- Despite there being a high need, spending on immunisation, maternity care, pharmaceuticals, dental care and practice nurse subsidies were below the regional averages.

### **Relationships with Porirua City Council**

Relationships between the health groups and PCC have been somewhat strained at times in the

past. In particular, health group members considered that the PCC should have taken a stronger, more active leadership role in the past. There was also criticism of PCC's policies that

were focused on economic development and growth, targeted at attracting "high value"

<sup>2</sup> Central Regional Health Authority (September 1994): "Strong Links: Building Better Services to Meet the Health

and Disability Support Service Needs of People in Porirua", as reported by John Cody in his paper "Social Capital and Health: Community Health Activity in Porirua".

40% of the population in levels 1-4 53% of the population in levels 7-10

**Less deprived More deprived**

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 3

developments and residents; critics considered that greater attention and support was needed at

the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum.

From the Council's side, it did not see itself as having a strong role to play in health issues early in

this process. Nor was there a strong sponsor of health related issues on the Council, even though it provided some level of support to community groups and trusts through its community

development focus. The Council's attitude began to change from the mid-1990s onwards, recognising the further retrenchment and reformation of the health sector. In addition

Agenda

21 and wider debate about the role of local government in supporting sustainable communities

may also have influenced this, and PCC was also reassessing and developing its capacity for policy analysis during this time.

Its commitment to tackling health-related issues, however, really took off with the election of a new Mayor and one of the new Councillors, who were strong, passionate advocates on these issues. The Mayor in particular had a strong background in the health sector and in community development, which also helped to smooth the relationships between the community groups and Council.

### **The role of Council in health issues**

It was recognised by various parties (not always the Council itself) that the Council has a key role in the provision of a healthy environment, and can play an important role in relation to the provision of health services, without actually being engaged in health services delivery. The Council ensures there is an infrastructure of services (sewerage, water, waste disposal, etc.) in place to maintain a healthy population. As a public body, it can also represent the city in health services, through:

- Assisting with the monitoring of services
- Calling the Ministry of Health and Health Funding Authority to account for their obligations
- Calling the Health Providers to account for the delivery of their services
- Lobbying appropriate Ministers over their obligations.

At a local level, the Council can contribute to the provision of health services through its governance role in a number of ways:

- Maintaining and facilitating community forums for dialogue and deliberation about current health issues.
- Identifying and monitoring a range of indicators of “City health”.
- Publishing the findings of monitoring programmes, and facilitating the sharing of information, including reporting the results of community forums.
- It has the mana to encourage and develop relationships between communities of interest, and the mandate for legitimate expressions of public concerns and proposals.

#### *The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 4

- The Council lends credibility to applications for funding/projects where funders often view these as being more stable or credible where there is local government involvement; through this the Council can facilitate closer relationships with external organisations.
- Providing the “big picture” view, with an overview of a range of different organisations, assists the integration of functions and activities. Strategic focus, where health policies and issues can be incorporated into strategic planning processes.

### **Community Groups involved in health issues**

Through the 1990s there have been three separate community groups with strong interests in the health of the Porirua city – the Porirua Healthy Safer City Trust (PHSCT), the Porirua Community Health Group (PCHG) and the Porirua Health Partnership (PHP). Each of these

groups has strong cross-linkages and support for each other.

#### *Porirua Healthy Safer City Trust*

The PHSCT is a body that incorporated the activities of the Healthy City Trust, established in

1993 as part of the international Healthy Cities movement, and the Safer Community Council,

established in 1994 as a government initiative to fund safer community projects. Around 30 organisations and individuals are members of the Trust, representing government departments

and organisations (including Police, Education, ACC, Te Puni Kokiri, Social Welfare, Education,

Pacific Island Affairs, Public Health, Work and Income, Housing NZ), community support agencies such as women, victim, disability, family and youth services organisations, Maori and

Pacific communities, and the PCC.

The focus of the Trust's work is on crime prevention and health promotion through advocacy,

facilitation, networking and project involvement. Its key goals are to:

- Increase community awareness of healthy and safe lifestyles
- Reduce the incidence of violence in the community
- Increase the scope and effectiveness of initiatives that address the issues and concerns of families at risk
- Reduce the incidence of misuse and abuse of alcohol and drugs
- Achieve better targeting, attainment and use of resources for community health and safety programmes
- Increase the strength and effectiveness of community activity through improved communication and access to quality information.

#### *Porirua Community Health Group*

The PCHG is a voluntary association of people with a deep and ongoing interest in the community and health services, set up in 1992 as what was effectively a liaison committee of the

CRHA. It monitored primary and secondary health services provided in the Porirua City area. It

was recognised as being a legitimate contact point and spokesperson on a wide range of issues in

#### *The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 5

health, and has been one of the more successful community health consultation groups in the

Wellington region. When RHA funding ceased, the PCC continued to support its work, providing some liaison and administrative services and seeking advice from it on community health issues.

The PCHG continues to provide forums for providers, health professionals and members of the

public to discuss or disseminate information on health issues. Its primary focus is to share information, network and link with other organisations, and identify issues that can be taken

up

by the Four Circles partnership or other appropriate groups. It currently has a membership of about 150 individuals and organisations. Monthly meetings are generally well attended, with between 20 and 50 people from various organisations and the general public.

### *The Porirua Health Partnership*<sup>3</sup>

The PHP brings together a number of voluntary associations and organisation with an interest in

health issues, including active members of the Ngati Toa and Taura Here Runanga, Pacific people's associations, the Porirua Community Health Group, staff of the Health Services Research Centre, Porirua City Council, Whitireia Community Polytechnic and Public Health Service (Hutt Valley Health).

The PHP was formed in response to the 1994 CRHA needs assessment ("Strong Links").

That

report had also concluded that "a good foundation (existed) for providing quality health and disability support services in Porirua, but that stronger links (needed) to be made between service

providers and, more particularly, between service providers and consumers".

Within the community, however, there were doubts about the strength of the 'foundations'.

There were views that similar findings had been reported for more than twenty years without an

effective response; and concerns over an implication that there needed to be a fundamental change in the way various communities related to each other. Also, the effects of health reforms

meant that the agencies responsible for delivering health services were continually changing.

From the community's point of view they were fragmented and divided, working against each

other in a competitive manner and lacking trust.

The PHCG looked at the Strong Links report and recognised that the concerns raised in it also

reflected what people said in its forums. The PCHG also knew, however, that it didn't have the

capacity to address these issues itself. It approached the PHSCT and the PCC, but they did not

consider they had a role to play to lead initiatives, although they were willing to participate. A

local kaumatua from the tangata whenua, Ngatittoa, provided the leadership, vision and support

for the PHP to become established.

The PHP, therefore, developed as a network of people seeking to improve access to appropriate

health services and health status, sharing information and acting as a catalyst for responses to the

"Strong Links" report.

The PHP's main objectives have been to develop a self-managed, growing and sustainable network of interested people; and to integrate that activity with the Porirua City Council's strategic planning and review processes. It is interested in increasing participation through information sharing.

<sup>3</sup> Based on John Cody's paper, *op. cit.*

Page 6

Key features of the PHP are the strength of its networks, and its three-caucus structure.

Within

the PHP there are individuals with extensive expertise in their own right, and with links to other

expertise in health areas. These people know how the health system works and can suggest strategies for progressing issues – for example, tackle the policy-makers who fund health service

delivery rather than the health providers directly. Through conferences, networks and their own

interests, members of the PHP have access to information, new ideas, and special expertises (e.g.

in child dental health) that have helped them gain credibility when dealing with policy-makers.

The PHP has a structure of three caucuses – one each for Maori, Pacific people and Pakeha. They share a commitment to work in partnership on issues that affect the well-being of Porirua

people, recognising that different cultures have different ways of tackling issues and bring different perspectives to the discussions. Each caucus has its own autonomy, but the PHP recognises that the consensus of all caucuses is necessary; while each caucus has a power of veto

this has never been exercised.

The basic process by which the PHP works is that information is presented to the group, before

it is thoroughly discussed by each caucus independently, and then again by the PHP as a whole

until a consensus is reached. This process has been rigorously enforced, even when some caucuses have been prepared to take short-cuts, which has instilled a discipline and has now become second nature to the PHP's deliberations.

#### **Coming Together of Four Circles<sup>4</sup>**

There developed a growing recognition among the community groups active in health issues that

it was difficult to establish credibility with key decision-makers in central government and the

health sector, to the extent that the mandate of the groups was challenged on a number of occasions. It was realised that there was a link missing between the community and external organisations; effectively there was no voice that represented the City as a whole.

The Council was seen as the only body in a position to provide a leadership role and facilitate a

participatory process, but the Council link between the community, external organisations and

central government was considered to be under-utilised and Council lobbying had been seen as

reactive rather than participatory.

The Four Circles was seen as the beginning of a commitment to develop a process to support

solutions to local problems, with the challenge for the Council being “to understand, build

connections and develop a communication process among those with an active interest in the public health of the City.”<sup>5</sup>

The Four Circles concept was developed on the back of a napkin, but has become somewhat of a

rallying point for the parties involved. The roles of each partner were clarified vis-à-vis each other: the PCC and PHSCT carried the authority and mandate of the community (the PCC) and

various government agencies (the PHSCT), and they are supported by the community groups –

the PCHG, an open forum that anyone could attend, and the PHP, which represented and disseminated information to the three cultural communities. Each partner retains its

<sup>4</sup>This section adapted from Gillon, *et al.*, “Developing a Process for Health Issues”

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 7

independence and autonomy, and the partnership agreed to meet and work together on specific issues.

Success in addressing and making submissions on a number of health issues has been based on

the idea that good outcomes will be achieved if the community is involved in local planning through transparent, participatory processes with the best information available.

The dental health issue is an example of the way in which the partners work (see inset).

### **The Healthlinks Project**

A major piece of community consultative work that the Four Circles were involved in was the submission to the Ministry of Health on proposals to establish a new tertiary hospital for the Wellington region, advocating that it be established at Porirua.

PCC played a major role, working with the community to put a submission together. It could see not only benefits for health services in Porirua, but also major spin-off's for economic development and jobs in supporting a tertiary hospital in the region. When it became apparent that Porirua's submission would not be successful, and the government of the day decided on an alternative site for the tertiary hospital, the then Minister of Health allocated \$150,000 for a project for Porirua City and Kapiti District Councils to improve coordination of services at community and primary health care levels and the better integration of primary and secondary health services.

The Minister, in October 1999, allocated \$150,000 via the Ministry of Health for a study to identify ways to improve health and disability outcomes for people on the Kapiti Coast and in Porirua city, and come up with a plan for each area. While the two areas had a common need for health services outside the Wellington city area, the type of services required and demographic features were very different.

The Healthlinks Project was formed as a partnership involving representatives from both Porirua and Kapiti Coast including the Porirua City Council and Kapiti Coast District Council, Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira, Te Runanga o Raukawa, Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai and Taurahere, representatives of Pacific peoples, along with a representative from the Ministry of Health.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from the “*Porirua Health and Disability Report and Plan*” (2000), pp 89-90.

### **Dental Health Services in Porirua**

In 1998 the Council identified that there had been a significant worsening in Porirua children’s dental health in recent years. At the same time the PCHG was hearing through its open forums that dental health was a significant issue for many families.

These concerns were brought to the attention of the PHP, which identified the issues, among which was that a major component relating to preventative education was missing from the contract to provide dental health services. The PHP researched alternative strategies for addressing the problems. These included using its networks to bring an expert in child dental health down from Auckland to talk to the community, and bringing in the PHSCT whose member agencies had also identified dental issues. It also recognised that an integrated approach was required and they needed the PCC to work at a policy level with Government.

The PHP and PCHG prepared a report for PCC, who accepted responsibility for advocating Porirua’s interests in the dental issue to the relevant central government agencies, in particular the Health Funding Authority and Ministry of Health, over the gaps in the dental purchasing framework. In addition the PCC agreed to undertake a quasi-monitoring role to ensure the relevant health provider complies with its contractual obligations. The health provider is now working with the PCC and PHP to implement a Dental Health Education Service.

### *The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 8

A project manager was appointed and terms of reference were agreed. The project manager then established separate project teams in both Kapiti and Porirua, which brought together information about the health and disability needs, services and priorities in each area. From January 2000 onwards, the Porirua Project Team gathered information about people's health status, health and disability services and their use from a variety of sources. Gathering information on health status and service use involved.

- Analysing information from the New Zealand Health Information Service, Health Benefits

Limited, the HFA, Statistics New Zealand and the Porirua City Council.

- Collecting information directly from service providers.
- Using national data, often contained in Ministry of Health publications, to indicate trends in service use and health risk factors that might apply to Porirua.

A major benefit of the Ministry of Health involvement was the ability to gain access to data that

was for Porirua only, rather than wider regional data.

From late March 2000 onwards, meetings and focused discussions were held with the general

public, health and disability providers, community groups, and organisations with an interest in

health-related issues. People's views were sought on what they perceive to be problems with existing services or service gaps; local priorities and how to address these; and services that are

working well.

The Porirua Health Partnership's extensive mailing list of providers and people with an interest in

health issues was used to identify who should be involved in the consultation process. In addition, notices and articles appeared in the weekly community newspapers advising people about upcoming meetings.

A wealth of information was gathered about service use, health status and views from the public

and providers to help the community and the Healthlinks Project identify what is needed to improve health and disability outcomes in Porirua. In compiling its report, the Porirua Project

Team had to make judgements about what to include, as this method of participatory research

meant that not all views could be represented verbatim. However, the Project Team tried to reflect the different views held by the many participants.

A series of discussions were then held by the project manager with the HFA and providers including Capital Coast Health, Hutt Valley Health, WIPA, Pacific providers and Maori providers

to discuss the initial findings and the priorities, and whether they were able to take action in relation to some of the priority areas that had been identified. Where they were able to take action, these were identified as 'Action Agreed' in the plan.

In July 2000, a draft of the plan was circulated to all organisations that had been involved with its

development. Feedback, both written and from meetings specifically set up to discuss the draft,

was generally positive, with various suggestions being received about how the document should

be refined. This feedback was built into the document.

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 9

The community and service providers were clear that they did not see this process finishing with

the forwarding of the plan to the Minister of Health. It was definitely seen as a step along the

way, and that from this, partnerships would develop and evolve to carry the recommendations forward in order to improve health and disability outcomes for the people of Porirua. Phase II of the Healthlinks Project, as it is being called, will see the governance group reconstituted and its role re-defined. The three-caucus approach adopted by the PHP is being contemplated for the governance structure of Phase II of the Healthlinks Project, but has yet to be resolved. The Ministry of Health and the Mayor of Porirua City Council have stepped back from the process, with PCC still involved and providing ongoing support for the work of the group, which will be to monitor the actions agreed by the various health providers, and continue to pursue the recommendations made in the plan. It was important for the dynamics within Porirua that the community actively participate in and own the process, as well as develop their capacity to do so. PCC's role becomes more one of support, ensuring people and information are linked together, and enhancing the capacity of groups to win contracts and deliver the services needed. The Mayor's role in particular, together with tangata whenua representatives, focuses more on lobbying and advocacy on behalf of the community for the upgrading of the local hospital to a secondary services level (which is still in doubt), at the highest political levels. The plan will also be an invaluable resource to the new District Health Board covering the region, with the Healthlinks Project also providing links between the District Health Board and the community.

### **The Strategic Plan**

Other developments that have had an impact on the roles and relationships between PCC and community have been the participatory planning process adopted for the development of the PCC's Strategic Plan for 2000-2010. This involved extensive interaction with the community, with almost 500 organisations and individuals being contacted, mainly by phone, and invited to attend public meetings, and a series of further meetings. At the meetings people were asked to brainstorm the following questions:

- What do you really like about Porirua City?
- What do you not like about Porirua City?
- How would you like Porirua City to be in 10 years' time?
- What is the role of the Council and others in helping to achieve this future?
- How can we promote Porirua City?

Where particular groups were not well represented at the public meetings, special sectoral

forums, hui and a fono were held, to ensure that groups had the opportunity to participate in a way that suited them.

All the ideas were brought together at a wrap-up meeting, so people had an opportunity to hear

the ideas that had come from about 50 separate meetings. All the ideas were written up, and

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 10

community members led more detailed small group discussions on the themes identified, reaching

agreements on plans and specific tasks for the future. In all around 900 people attended the meetings with about 100 attending more than one.

From this the Council developed a draft strategic plan, which was distributed to all the participants of the meetings and other interested people. Workshops were convened by Council

and facilitated by community leaders. These allowed participants to provide feedback on the plan, and come up with some new ideas, and a sense of priorities for proposed strategies, identified partnerships for taking implementation of strategies forward and in some cases set milestones.

Forums have been created around each of the eight strategic goals - economic growth and development, health and housing, education and training, the natural and physical environment,

young people, city life, transport and creation of a positive image. The strategic planning process

has provided an excellent framework for discussing these issues, and provides a community mandate for the Council to take a role in them.

### **Benefits from the project**

In addition to specific outputs, including plans and agreements to improve health services, the

processes and evolution of the Four Circles and Healthlinks Project partnerships have had the

following benefits for the Council and the parties involved:

- The establishment of better relationships and linkages between community and Council.
- Improved communication and participation between all involved in the processes.
- A high level of disclosure of information, and trust forming as a result.
- Greater awareness of, and activity in the community by Council, and awareness of and participation in Council processes by community groups.
- A commitment to continue to work together.

### **Lessons learned and key ingredients for success**

The process of building partnerships involving PCC and community groups such as the PHP,

Four Circles and Healthlinks Project has been a long one, and not without its difficulties.

Following is a distillation of some of the lessons learned along the way and ingredients for successful partnerships.

#### *Building relationships*

Building relationships takes time – they cannot be done in a rush – and this needs to occur. The

establishment of relationships begins with the development of and commitment to key processes and understandings around how the parties will work together, and their respective deliberation processes for ensuring the wider community is involved. Involving the community leaders and key influencers from different cultures and from different subject areas is an essential part of this.

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 11

There also needs to be sincerity and a genuine desire to bridge what may have been gaps or differences in the past, and commitment to recognising the alternative ways that different cultures take in information, consider it and come to conclusions and decisions. Within the PHP,

for example, there was almost an obsession with process, and insistence that each caucus take the

time to consider and debate the issues in their own ways. This builds commitment to the outcomes and conclusions. A number of early projects the PHP was engaged in did not succeed

when this process was not followed. It can be frustrating and appear cumbersome, however, for

external parties if they consider there is need to respond quickly at times.

Associated with this is a need for there to be an openness of dialogue, a willingness to give and

take, discuss mistakes and engage in post mortems without blame or criticism – how and what

can we learn from this experience? Take responsibility if you get things wrong, rather than blaming others or “trying to brush it under the carpet”.

*Treat with respect*

When involving external organisations, do so in the sense of creating an opportunity to work with the local community to remedy a problem. Avoid attacking, criticising or demanding actions – this will provoke a defensive reaction. Instead, assume that the people you are dealing

with want to do their jobs well, and rather than approach an issue with a “them and us” frame of

mind, deal with it as a shared problem where all parties want an outcome. It also helps if you can

go into a situation with some solution(s) in mind – but be prepared to gather information, leave

room for other variables to be taken into account, listen to other solutions and modify your own

– rather than expecting the other party to come up with answers.

Respect other partners’ organisational autonomy, but recognise and value the benefits of pooling

knowledge and expertise. This involves respecting different perspectives, and the value of bringing these to bear on an issue.

*Good information, shared*

Information and effective analysis is critical, and the Council is often in the best position to

provide that analytical capability. The development of the Porirua City Profile, for example, was

an immensely useful resource. Ensuring each party has the same, better information leads to:

- Improved monitoring.
- Better identification of information gaps.
- A better basis for information exchange/communication between the community, providers and agencies.
- More transparency.
- An ability to identify indicators to measure the success of strategies.

One of the biggest areas in which councils can assist community groups is in contributing capacity for information gathering and analysis. Communities on their own cannot achieve much

without the help and support of other organisations such as councils.

*The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 12

There needs to be a high degree of reciprocity to facilitate information sharing, understanding

respective roles and responsibilities, understanding different commitments and contributions, and

an awareness of common goals.

*Make Council accessible*

Make council processes more accessible to the community. Formal procedures and protocols

that may govern council-run meetings can be a barrier to community involvement, if they lack an

understanding of decision-making processes and how to get issues on the table and points of view across. Council meetings often need to be more open and inclusive; resort to formality and

procedural correctness has, in the past, stymied involvement of the community in government

processes.

*Develop understanding*

Within councils, a great deal of work is often needed on issues to develop understanding and buy-in among the councillors and staff. Again this relates to building relationships and understanding of what is trying to be achieved. It involves learning and working through political

processes of Councils.

*Leadership with community leaders*

There can be a tendency for strong leaders and/or specialists to charge on ahead with the view

“trust me, I know what I’m doing” or “I know what’s best for you”. When working with people

that are not subject to your authority, that can be seen as patronising and rub people up the wrong way – people who need more time to become used to the ideas, and who need to be committed to the outcomes if they are to be successful.

There is a need to be wary of pushing a project down a track that is either at odds with the community’s wishes, or without the involvement and participation of the community

(recognising, however, that there will be decisions that need to be made that are not universally popular – in such instances full communication of all the reasons for the decision and how alternate views have been (or cannot be) accommodated is desirable). Otherwise the support and commitment of the community will not be there, even though their best interests may be at the heart of the decision.

Similarly, one needs to be sensitive to when it is timely and appropriate to take a leadership role, and drive a process forward, and when it is more appropriate to step back and let the community determine the direction and pace. Generally, the council can provide the focus that is needed to kick-start a project and get it running, and act as an advocate if required. However, it then needs to be able to stand back and let the community decide what it wants.

### *Know your community*

Get the dialogue going with communities. Identify who is out there, who the leaders are, what they are doing and what their issues are, is essential. Consider the long-running agendas that some voluntary groups have established, what they've achieved and where they've been frustrated. Relate to where the energy appears to be working on the long-running issues. Develop mechanisms and forums for talking to each other, and create the environment for partnerships to develop. Consider what could be offered to them, and how the politics of the

### *The Porirua Health Partnership*

Page 13

Council debating chamber affects them. Council leaders need to get together with community leaders to talk issues through – what are the needs of their constituencies and how can these be accommodated.

Create opportunities for bringing people together, putting people in touch with one another, and leveraging off existing structures and relationships. In many cases, the personal networks of council leaders can be used to access resources and contacts on behalf of communities, identify and seize opportunities.

### **Concluding comment...**

Relationships between community health groups and Porirua City Council are continuing to evolve, although they are far more settled now than they have been in the past. In large part this is due to the Council taking a more holistic view of its role in the economic, social and environmental development of Porirua city; and Council leaders with a strong belief in empowering the communities, but taking leadership roles when they have to. It is also due to the

persistence of a group of highly committed and experienced “health experts” and community leaders working on behalf of the community. The community has evolved a model of operating – the three-caucus structure – that recognises different cultures have different ways of tackling issues and bring different perspectives to the discussions. Time, patience and commitment are required to build trust and understanding of the diverse perspectives, if the support of different communities within the community for proposed actions is to be achieved.

The next incarnation of these relationships in respect of health issues, Healthlinks Phase II, promises to be just as interesting, as the respective parties involved re-establish their roles and develop new ways of relating to each other as the focus on their community’s health issues changes.

**For further information, contact:**

Carolyn Adams Ph: (04) 237-1498  
Manager Policy Development Email: cadams@pcc.govt.nz  
PO Box 50-218  
Porirua City

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**Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their assistance and support in

preparing this case study:

- Jenny Brash, Mayor, PCC

- Carolyn Adams, Manager Policy Development, PCC
- Maureen Gillon, Councillor, PCC
- John Cody, Convener of Pakeha Caucus, Porirua Health Partnership
- Jane Shaw, Convener of Maori Caucus, Porirua Health Partnership
- Gayle Chalmers, Coordinator, Porirua Community Health Group & Porirua Healthier Safer Cities Trust.

**“Ask the young people”**

**Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)  
The Rotorua Youth Consultation Project**

**Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora te iwi**

**(With your basket of knowledge and my basket of knowledge, we will all succeed.)**

**Introduction**

The Rotorua Youth Consultation Project – Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring) – involved scores of organisations throughout Rotorua’s communities and nearly three thousand (around 20%) of Rotorua’s youth population. It was a collaboration of local organisations and services involved with the young people of Rotorua to seek the ideas and opinions of local youth about what their needs are and how these can be addressed. The process stimulated the enthusiasm of all who participated in it, and the information that has come from the project has provided an extremely valuable database to assist the Rotorua District Council and other organisations with their planning and decision-making processes.

**Background**

In its strategic planning processes, Rotorua’s residents and ratepayers told the Rotorua District Council (RDC) that they wanted local youth needs addressed. Workshops with RDC Councillors identified that the RDC was already involved in many activities that were for young people. As a result the RDC made a commitment to look more closely at those issues and rethink what positive roles it could play as a local authority. It began background work for the Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring) Project in 1997. While there was unanimous support from among Councillors that something had to be done about the youth issues in Rotorua District, there was no agreement about what should be done. A leading Councillor who was supportive of efforts to identify youth issues from the outset continually reinforced the need for information on which to base decisions. It took some work to convince the majority of Councillors that first the research needed to be done, as there was a

lack of understanding about how research could be used. Then, when the Mayor and District Manager got in behind the proposals, the impetus developed further.

Recognising that local authority input was only one small piece of the overall picture, the RDC

invited other interested organisations to become involved. It was not difficult to get different organisations involved as many could identify with youth issues. As youth issues are handled by

a number of different government organisations, which has led to some fragmentation of services

and a tendency to treat symptoms rather than causes of problems, the departments and agencies

involved were happy for the RDC to take a lead co-ordinating role.

In late 1997 two hui were held with representatives of schools, runanga, government departments

and youth-work organisations. It was agreed through these hui that a strategic and collaborative approach to researching and addressing local youth needs was a high priority and a clear message came through:

*“ask the young people”.*

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 2

Thus it was agreed that part of the strategy would involve consulting with local young people themselves about their issues and priorities. The results of the project would be used to guide the

RDC's youth policy, and would also be available to a wide range of other interested local organisations and funding bodies to help their strategic planning and resource allocation decisions.

Council set the broad direction for the project, and a reasonable consensus was gained about the

type of questions that needed to be asked. Councillors were then generally happy to step back

and let the Council staff manage the process. This included developing a comprehensive demographic profile of the District, and paying careful attention to the research methodology,

ensuring it was robust enough to give reliable results that could withstand scrutiny.

In July 1998, the RDC invited other organisations to

become funder-stakeholders to the project. Four organisations took up the invitation. Many more, particularly schools and youth organisations, offered support by way of time, effort and the provision of venues and facilities, including acting as key contacts for inviting young people's participation.

The definition of “youth” for the project was deliberately kept broad, ranging from 10 to 25 years of age. Schools

advised that young people's issues were starting from as young as age 10 (standard 4). At the other end, the Council was told that they shouldn't cut off too early, particularly as in the Maori

culture people were still considered “young” at the upper ages of the range chosen. This age range had some implications for the research as we identify later.

A Steering Group of six people was set up to guide the project, lead by the RDC but involving other external people who had an understanding of community development and youth, and were well networked. It included three staff from the RDC – the Social Policy Officer (also the Steering Group Co-ordinator), Social Research Officer and Maori Cultural Adviser; a Fieldworker from WINZ – Community Employment; a Youth Health Promoter from Toi Te Ora – Public Health; and the Co-ordinator for the Rotorua Safer Community Council. At the first meeting of the Steering Group it was decided that a youth advisory group was required, but that this wouldn't work if the young people were involved directly within the Steering Group because of power and knowledge imbalances. Te Pukenga Rangatahi<sup>1</sup> was therefore set up alongside the Steering Group. It comprised 13 young people aged between 10 and 25 years, of mixed gender and ethnicity, from different parts of the Rotorua District. They were broadly representative of the demographic profile of young people in the Rotorua District, brought together to specifically guide the consultation project and advise the “oldies” how best to consult with the young people of Rotorua. Due to time constraints, the members of Te Pukenga Rangatahi were identified through the personal networks of the Steering Group members. This had a positive spin off in that the young people involved then knew at least one member of the Steering Group and were not faced with a group of total strangers.

<sup>1</sup> Translates loosely as a “special” or “skilled” group of young people.

#### **Te Puna Rangatahi Sponsors**

- Rotorua District Council
  - Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust
  - Rotorua Safer Community Council
  - WINZ – Community Employment (formerly CEG)
  - Toi Te Ora – Public Health (the public health arm of Pacific Health)
- Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 3

The project relied strongly on Te Pukenga Rangatahi's input. The young people were enthusiastic about being involved because they were being asked for their opinions, contributing to something that had an impact on the entire youth population in the Rotorua District, and learning new skills. Throughout the project the Steering Group and Te Pukenga Rangatahi worked together with the help of a group facilitator experienced in dealing with youth, to plan and implement each step of the consultation process. The facilitator was essential for the process. He helped develop a cohesive group from a very diverse range of individuals in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. He

also helped create a safe environment for the young people to speak up and have their say, helped translate what the Steering Group wanted from Te Pukenga Rangatahi into a series of tasks and goals with timeframes attached, and became an advocate for Te Pukenga Rangatahi

with the Steering Group – “*He gave us guidance on how to think, not what to think*” (Te Pukenga Rangatahi member).

The concept that adults and youth should work together and listen to each other was taken very

seriously by the Steering Group. At the beginning of the project they chose the whakataauaki (proverb) at the top of this case study to symbolise the consultation process. This was symbolised within Te Pukenga Rangatahi by having a kefe (basket) with their group values written on the outside, and into which they placed all their work at the end of each session.

Te Pukenga Rangatahi’s input challenged the Steering Group and made them think about different ways of doing things, which would better relate to the young people of Rotorua. Te Pukenga Rangatahi developed the name and logo for the project (see inset), helped plan the wording of the questions and other logistical matters for the focus groups, the design of the youth survey and the media strategy. The group was also involved in the initial analysis of the focus group feedback, and near the end of the project helped transform the results of the focus groups into a video, while a sub-group developed a youthfriendly report of the overall project findings.

### **The Project – Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)**

Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring) consisted of two stages. The first was a series of 32 focus groups of around 10-12 young people between the ages

#### **The Rotorua Youth Consultation Project**

Concepts Te Pukenga Rangatahi (the youth advisory group) linked to the project’s name were:

- *The sound of running water is similar to the murmur of many voices. Also, water is a key aspect of people’s mental image of Rotorua.*
- *The flowing and bubbling of a spring embodies the vitality and energy of young people.*
- *A spring can affect the course and nature of a river and the surrounding land. When a spring is healthy, strong and clean, so*

*is the river, and the surrounding land is able to be fertile and lush. Similarly, the well-being of our District's young people will affect the whole future of Rotorua as a District.*

- *A fresh young spring running into and shaping a river is similar to the voices, attitudes and thoughts of Rotorua young people melding with the power and influence of the Council and other community organisations supporting the project.*

- *The flexibility of water (i.e., its ability to find a way around or through almost any obstacle) is another similarity with this project - we will not be thwarted!*

The project's logo represents a droplet of water falling into a rippling stream. The droplet symbolises Te Pukenga Rangatahi, and the stream represents all Rotorua young people. Within the droplet is a koru, symbolising the emergence and growth of young people.

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 4

### **“The schools were so keen to be involved...”**

of 10 and 25 years, often with distinct demographic characteristics. The focus groups were held

between October and December 1998. Each focus group was facilitated by a team of two people

briefed for the role, and was asked to discuss three key questions:

- What do young people like about Rotorua?
- What issues are important to Rotorua young people?
- What would young people like to change about Rotorua?

The second stage was a written survey, with Stage One outcomes helping to identify potential

survey questions that were of importance. It enabled the project to consult with a greater crosssection

of young people; identify and validate some of the issues that came through from the focus groups; and prioritise some of the key issues and ideas young people had. Around 2,700

surveys were completed over the first part of February 1999. They were distributed through schools, employers, training and youth organisations. Fieldworkers also surveyed young people in

the city centre, at shopping centres, in public areas and at youth activities and venues.

### **Key Supporting Processes**

#### *Managing groups and relationships*

The involvement of Te Pukenga Rangatahi, the Steering Group's commitment to bringing in “young” thinking and the success of the relationship between the Steering Group and Te Pukenga Rangatahi were crucial to the project. The facilitator who worked with Te Pukenga Rangatahi to facilitate interaction between them and the Steering Group played a vital role in this

relationship. It was difficult, but essential, to ensure that the members of Te Pukenga Rangatahi

were kept informed of the impacts their input had on the “big picture” as the project unfolded.

At the start of each meeting of the Steering Group and Te Pukenga Rangatahi, feedback was provided about what had been done with the input from Te Pukenga Rangatahi since the

previous session. This was something, however, that the Steering Group identified they could have done much better. Meetings of the Steering Group itself were run and facilitated very smoothly. This was helped by all the parties having common goals and philosophies with regard to trusting young people to have their say and become involved. There was a good mix of people who knew the District well and those who had more recently come to it, and a compatibility of different personalities. All the parties felt they could contribute equally, there were good ground-rules that people respected, members had good planning and time management skills, and the meetings were kept on track and decisions made.

Other aspects of managing groups and relationships that were important for the project included:

- getting buy-in and a reasonable consensus from Councillors about the approach and types of questions to be asked
- leaving Te Pukenga Rangatahi to run themselves, with the help of the facilitator but separate from the Steering Group who were available to answer questions when they met *Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*
- using a more personal approach, such as personal invitations, along with agendas and information, being sent to Te Pukenga Rangatahi members by the Steering Group Coordinator prior to each meeting of Te Pukenga Rangatahi and the Steering Group, and
- providing feedback to the many groups and organisations involved in the process via newsletters sent out by the Steering Group.

#### *Gaining the trust of participants*

The issue of raising expectations among Rotorua young people needed to be addressed throughout the consultation process. There was some cynicism that anything worthwhile would result from them having their say. The facilitators and survey fieldworkers needed to reassure consultation participants that the information would be put to good use, but could give no promises about any eventual outcomes. This is a critical point for the RDC to follow through on, to give credibility to its commitment to address youth needs. At the time of preparing this case study, the RDC had used information from the focus groups to guide decisions about the extension of a skateboard park in Rotorua and a Youth Celebration Festival had been organised and sponsored with support from RDC. A draft Youth Policy and Action Plan has also been formulated. This is good evidence that the consultative process is making a difference.

Te Pukenga Rangatahi also experienced some doubts about how much notice would be taken of their input, and whether they were there as a token gesture. These doubts particularly reared up if they went beyond what the Steering Group expected of them. On the whole, however, they could see that their input made a difference to the process.

#### *Focus group processes*

The careful selection of facilitators for the focus groups was essential, as was their full briefing and training. Requests for expressions of interest were sent out to a number of different groups known for their ability to provide facilitation services. They were asked to describe their approach to facilitation, track record with specific age groups, and to ensure they had an appropriate gender and ethnic mix. They were then matched with an appropriate target focus group.

The use of personal networks by members of the Steering Group and Te Pukenga Rangatahi in setting up the focus groups was of considerable importance. There were, however, a number of difficult target groups identified for the focus groups that the project had difficulty in setting up, and in some instances planned meetings had to be abandoned. The difficult groups included rural young people between 18 and 25 years of age, young people with disabilities, and gay and lesbian young people.

#### *Communication, feedback and reporting*

Throughout the project, the Steering Group and Te Pukenga Rangatahi planned media contact and stakeholder feedback. Community awareness was generated through regular newsletters to stakeholders (more than 100 organisations), articles in local daily newspapers and the New Zealand Herald, and advertisements on local radio stations throughout the survey stage of the project. Good media relations were established. Formal iwi contact was maintained via Te Arawa Maori Trust Board.

#### *Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 6

Since the completion of the survey there have also been a series of Special Reports which have distributed results from the study to various interested organisations and the public.

#### *Ethical guidelines*

A set of ethical guidelines was developed for the project. The main principles addressed by these were the informed consent of all participants (which meant information had to be provided in a manner and form that young people could understand) and parents if necessary; anonymity of

the participants and confidentiality of all data; social sensitivity to the age, gender, culture, religion and social class of all participants; and the right of participants to ask questions and to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Key Outputs**

A series of reports have been compiled that present information from the project. These include:

- Stage One – Focus Group Results
- Focus Group Results – Summary
- Stage Two – Survey Results
- Survey Results – Summary and a
- Technical Report.

In addition, information can be pulled out to suit specific needs, such as when the Skateboard

Park extensions were being talked about. Sixteen special reports have been prepared to date, drawing young people's comments from the database about a variety of issues (see inset for titles of reports completed).

The information from Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring) is far reaching and will allow many different organisations with an interest in the needs of local young people to zero in on the ideas of young people in different parts of the District about different issues, and compare opinions of males and females, different age groups and so on.

For the RDC, young people have provided useful information about many different things, including what they thought about public transport, parks and reserves, the environment, the City focus and specific facilities. They also gave a clear message that they would like more opportunity to participate in local government affairs.

### **Special Report Series**

1. Health and well-being (March 1999)
2. Cigarette smoking/Smokefree (March 1999)
3. Marijuana (March 1999)
4. Transport and road safety (March 1999)
5. Education, training and work (March 1999)
6. He kohinga whakaaro – take Maori (A gathering of thoughts on Maori issues) (May 1999)
7. Crime and safety (May 1999)
8. District Council facilities and services (May 1999)
9. Sports and games (May 1999)
10. Music, culture and youth talent (May 1999)
11. Tourism and business development (May 1999)

12. The natural environment (May 1999)
13. Ethnicity, race and culture (May 1999)
14. Reputation and self-image (May 1999)
15. Young women's issues (August 1999)
16. Legal rights and issues (November 1999)

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 7

## **“A fantastic and much needed step forward”**

**- Mayor**

**Grahame Hall**

The RDC has also developed a draft Youth Policy and Action Plan for the 1999/2000 year. The

Action Plan allows them to make progress quickly while the community considers the Youth Policy through the RDC's consultation process. The draft policy presents a vision for RDC's youth policy of “Rotorua – a great place to be young”. It recognises that:

*“(The) Council is just one player among many ... (but) at times Council, as the level of government closest to local communities, has a pivotal role to play in leading, co-ordinating, representing, advocating, and at times providing for the needs of local people. ... (It) is imperative that RDC continues to take a broad view of the needs and wishes of the young people in the District, and work in partnership with Iwi, organisations, services, communities and business which nurture and advance the needs of young people and their families/whanau.”* (Rotorua District Council Draft Youth Policy and 1999-2000 Action Plan, July 1999)

Information is being used by Toi Te Ora – Public Health to help plan future public health programmes such as smokefree, safe use of alcohol, mental health promotion, sexual health and

road traffic safety. Rotorua Safer Community Council is using information from the project to

help plan initiatives to reduce youth crime, and has identified a number of issues highlighted by youth in relation to the availability of public transport, access to youth activities, safe places to “hang out”, after school activities, and where young people go to get information and assistance.

### **Benefits from the project**

As well as having an extremely valuable and useful database of information about what the youth of Rotorua think about a vast range of subjects, there have been a number of other benefits arising from the project.

In particular, there has been a recognition and awareness by Councillors and the wider community of young people's needs, and that decision-makers need to involve young people,

integrate their views and “think young people” when issues are raised. The media focus has put a

more positive image of young people forward, and heightened awareness of their issues. The

project has helped change the focus of a lot of organisations in the community, getting them to relate more to what young people actually think. It has highlighted the profile of young people, giving them value and recognition. As a result, there is a greater understanding of “cause and effect” with problems that youth are perceived to have. This ensures the problems can be targeted rather than just the symptoms, and recognises the need to invest in young people if the community wants to avoid future problems. Through relationships within the Steering Group, and between Steering Group members and the facilitators used, networks of people and organisations working with young people have been strengthened. The RDC’s understanding of and relationships with organisations working in the youth sector are much better now, e.g. with schools the RDC has received invitations to talk about the project and the issues that have come out. Steering Group members have collaborated on other significant projects on the basis of these relationships developing. A spin-off for the RDC has been an improvement in their public image, as they are being seen now to be taking action with the information and “putting their money where their mouth is” in terms of funding and support for youth projects. People have a greater awareness of the support they can receive from the RDC and are more comfortable about being able to approach it for advice/support.

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 8

**“Young people were ‘buzzy’ – they’re asking us what we want”**

RDC has a credible, thorough piece of work to help inform decision-making. It has captured the views of a large portion of its youth population. The information gathered can be used to better target resources and support arguments/proposals, not just by the RDC but by any organisation.

Different organisations are starting to make changes supported by the research, and recognising the value of research generally. For example, the Rotorua Energy Charitable Trust, a major source of funding for community initiatives, has seen the value in having the RDC co-ordinate ideas/projects from community groups/suburbs linked back to sound research.

More young people now have a better understanding of organisations such

as RDC – they're enthused and interested that the RDC wanted them to have their say. It is hoped that more input into annual planning processes from youth will be encouraged by this process. Secondary schools became involved in Council business – there is a desire to see more of this from 7<sup>th</sup> form students. Members of Te

Pukenga Rangatahi also want to be more involved in other issues. The challenge will be responding to the question “what happens now?”

### **Lessons learned – Key ingredients for success**

There were a number of aspects to this project that were essential for its success.

#### *Involving the Community*

Starting with the assumption that this was a community wide issue and not just the RDC's, and

inviting wide input was key to the process from the start. Coupled with this was the key message

coming from the initial stakeholder hui: “talk to the young people – we can't make decisions for

them or without them”. For the project to then go ahead and consult with youth was seen as listening to the first hui's feedback, and the project had something to go back to the community

with as result of consultation process (“proof that we're listening”). This created local buy-in within the community. In such a project it was essential to get young people involved from the

start, in the planning, and include them throughout the process.

From the perspective of Maori, it was also important to have “neutral ground”, in community

facilities, for the initial hui – away from “big brother” RDC. It was commented that if the organising body (in this case the RDC) is a host, then it would be acceptable to use its facility; if,

however, they are a leader in the project, it is suggested that holding the hui on neutral ground is

more appropriate. The cultural dynamics of Rotorua helped the project in that there is one main

iwi (Te Arawa) in the majority, which has the infrastructure available – it would have been more

difficult if the tangata whenua were not in the majority.

In addition, RDC received accolades for working with/through organisations, such as schools,

which knew young people well. The Steering Group acknowledges it couldn't have got anywhere

without the level of support received from schools, who were keen to be involved.

#### *Feedback of and taking action with results*

The presentation of the wealth of information that has come out of the study back to organisations working with youth has been well received. The continual communication of progress and results through community newsletters, including the special youth focused

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 9

newsletter, has helped the community see what the Council has done to keep its commitment to

consult. It needs to go further than provision of information, however; tangible action needs to be taken with the results, and quick solutions should be looked for to get initial “runs on the board” and keep faith with the consultation process. This has been happening and needs to continue.

### *Research objectives and processes*

Research objectives need to be clear and the process managed effectively. This means getting clear from the start what you want to know (e.g. RDC had three simple questions) and, for Rotorua, the initial demographic profile of the district provided a good guide for the project. Managing the process effectively means good planning, keeping a tight rein on the logistics and

ensuring resources are available, and requires good project management skills to keep to timeframes.

Other aspects of the research process that helped make the project a success included:

- keeping the approach simple (RDC settled on a two-stage process – focus groups and survey)
- pre-testing of survey forms and the focus group design to ensure they “gelled” with the target audience
- selecting good facilitators, targeting them to the needs/profiles of the groups they are working with and briefing them well about what is required.

### *Establishing Te Pukenga Rangatahi*

As identified earlier, the establishment of Te Pukenga Rangatahi as a Youth Advisory Group was

essential to the success of the project. In particular, the Te Pukenga Rangatahi age range (10-25

years) was valuable, enabling the questions to be targeted in the right language from the beginning. Using a skilled facilitator, who could relate to young people, was also essential. He

helped establish a “contract” for how Te Pukenga Rangatahi would work together as a group,

which was vital for creating the right environment for Te Pukenga Rangatahi. Providing food

(and allowing Te Pukenga Rangatahi to decide what they would have) after an evening’s work

was also a useful tip that enhanced the development of Te Pukenga Rangatahi as a cohesive group by creating a social environment for them. It was also “proof” that the Steering Group

took their involvement seriously.

### **Lessons learned – Improving the way things were done**

As there usually is, there were a number of factors that the participants considered “could be done better next time”, and which become valuable lessons to pass on.

#### *Clarification of roles and responsibilities*

Clarifying roles, responsibilities and organisations’ level of involvement needs to be done early.

Funding or participating organisations need to clearly understand the role and scope of the project, what they will get for their money, what they have to do, and how decisions will be made

(e.g. does the lead agency have the final say, or are they working by consensus). If these are not

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 10

resolved and communicated to all the parties early on, issues that do arise may leave one or more

parties feeling disempowered and dissatisfied with the process.

Within this, involved parties should not think that their role ends when the research is completed

– it goes on. There is also a need to be as flexible as one can, within the parameters set.

*Timeframes*

The timeframes were very tight, but achievable, across the board. Essentially the Steering Group

had to meet RDC's annual planning timeframes. When consulting with iwi, however, there is a

need to get information out early. If any decision-making is required from iwi (such as whether

to participate or not), the consulting organisation needs to know and understand iwi protocols

for their decision-making process, and the infrastructure iwi have in place (although this is relevant to any external organisation's timeframes).

*Make the linkages back to the consultation process*

It is essential to have definite things come of the consultation process, and the link between the

consultation process and specific outcomes made clear. A council should only undertake such a

process if they're prepared to follow through and take action on the basis of the results. This means working out why they want to consult, then acting on the information received.

There was some early cynicism that young people's views would make a difference, although early actions taking account of feedback have helped to allay these concerns. People have shortterm

memories, however, and to keep the research alive, the links between the input young people gave and what is happening must continually be acknowledged. Some feedback suggests

that there is not widespread recognition among young people for the process that occurred. One case in point for Rotorua is the Youth Celebration Festival. This concept arose out of the

consultation process. Agencies/groups can link the initiative back to the consultation process,

but youth generally didn't make the link, which it is important to do.

Suggestions for maintaining these links include publishing another youth focused newsletter saying what has happened since the survey, with a list of the outcomes.

*Working with Te Pukenga Rangatahi*

Working with such a diverse group as Te Pukenga Rangatahi presented its challenges.

The broad age range wasn't too much of a barrier, once the group was working together.

Initially, however, shyness was an issue so there perhaps could have been more small group work

done. More peer support for the youngest members was needed, with two or three young people needing to be close in age – this is more necessary than for older ones. More time could have been spent at the start of the process with Te Pukenga Rangatahi to develop the group and relationships, and clarifying their role and the Steering Group's role. Questions to consider include how the advisory group should be involved – should there have been a representative from Te Pukenga Rangatahi on the Steering Group, to see how it operated and what happened with Te Pukenga Rangatahi's input? How should the Te Pukenga Rangatahi group have been selected?

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 11

The closure process for a group such as Te Pukenga Rangatahi needs to be handled carefully – a number of members wanted to continue in the role, almost as a Youth Council. Other parties also sought to use Te Pukenga Rangatahi as an advisory group for other purposes, although this was strongly resisted by the Steering Group because it was beyond the contract made with invited members. In both cases, issues arise as to whether this group has the mandate to represent young people in Rotorua. It is also desirable to avoid intermittent bursts of activity and involvement, followed by large gaps in contact or there may be a loss of momentum as people “forget” why they are there and what their role is. It would be better to have clear stages or blocks of work/involvement, i.e. work on the project for a period of time then a clear gap then a focused period again. Making this clear at the start may have helped the young people with the process of the project. With a group of young people, particularly, one needs to be wary of being taken too literally. This issue arose particularly in relation to requests for input or advice. Be careful to explain what is meant when you say “I want to hear from you” – i.e. it doesn't mean every word will be taken into account or acted upon, etc. The parameters need to be explained at the start of the process or the group may become disillusioned. While the Steering Group did well it could have communicated more than it did about why some of Te Pukenga Rangatahi's ideas were not acted on. Finally, a message from Te Pukenga Rangatahi – “don't feed young people lollies – it gets them over-hyped up!”

*Evaluations*

In retrospect the Steering Group considered it should have given some immediate feedback about the focus group outcomes to participants, using some simple technique. The logistics of

such an evaluation were discussed at an early planning meeting, but it did not proceed due to perceived difficulties. The Steering Group also felt they needed to properly plan for an evaluation of each stage of the project, including its closure – as it was, by good fortune an evaluation was done in the context of one member preparing a conference paper about the project.

#### *Issues specific to the youth focus*

The broad target age range for the project (10-25 years) was a challenge, particularly in terms of

designing the survey and ensuring the wording was pitched appropriately. The text proved to be

too difficult for some groups (e.g. those too young or not sufficiently literate), but not appropriate to others (e.g. aged 22-25 or young parents).

The timing of the project, over the period October-February, was a challenge as it coincided with

end-of-year exams, making it difficult to schedule school-based focus groups for certain age groups, and the busy-ness of school starting in February.

Fieldworkers sometimes felt that participants were answering “on behalf” of people in other age

groups rather than for themselves, and that sometimes parents would influence their children in

terms of their responses. Adults may also have influenced in classroom settings, where a teacher’s explanation of the topic under current discussion might have had an impact on

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 12

#### **“Do it – let youth have a voice”**

responses. Also, young people filling in a survey together, such as in a classroom, will be more

likely to give similar “group-think” responses.

Youth target groups that were difficult to reach included those young males with low literacy levels, especially when amongst a group of their peers. Young people who were neither at school

nor particularly involved in activities outside the home were also difficult to reach. More face to

face interviews with young people at their hang-outs may help – street interviews worked well, as

they captured young people not at school.

Greater resources could be directed towards surveying at youth events, such as sporting or social

events, in consultations of this type. There needs also to be a high public awareness raised through sufficient media coverage, and this should be well-budgeted for.

Finally, fieldworkers felt they would have been better placed to respond to requests for information in the field and raise general awareness if they had better promotional materials, including information brochures that they

could hand out.

### **In closing...**

In the words of a Te Pukenga Rangatahi member: "*Do it – let youth have a voice; kids aren't that hard*

*to understand; you need to listen, and understand what they're saying.*"

### **For further information, contact:**

Barbara MacLennan Ph: (07) 348-4199

Manager, Community Policy and Resources Fax: (07) 347-8318

Rotorua District Council Email: [barbara.maclennan@rdc.govt.nz](mailto:barbara.maclennan@rdc.govt.nz)

Private Bag 3029

Rotorua

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### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their assistance and support in

preparing this case study:

*Te Puna Rangatahi (Young Spring)*

Page 13

Barbara MacLennan (RDC) Ted Hansen (District Manager, RDC)

Paul Killerby (Social Research Officer, RDC) Heather Pearson (Toi Te Ora – Public Health)

Helen Aranui (WINZ – CEG) Blair Gilbert (Te Pukenga Rangatahi Facilitator)

Ben Steele (Te Pukenga Rangatahi member) Tracy McRae (Te Pukenga Rangatahi member)

Peter Waru (Rotorua Safer Community Council)

Cr Steve Chadwick (Chair, Community and Social Policy Committee, RDC)

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## **Environment Waikato and Participatory Appraisal**

### **What's Important to the People?**

#### **Introduction and Background**

In October 1999, Environment Waikato<sup>1</sup> (EW) conducted an innovative community consultation exercise with the people of Whangamata for the development of Whangamata Local Area Management Strategy (LAMS). Using a technique called "Participatory Appraisal", EW wanted to get the community's views about what was important to them for their own community's future.

Whangamata is one of the fastest growing districts in the Waikato Region. Situated on the Coromandel Peninsula coast about xx km north of Tauranga, it has a growing local population of 3,700, and is a popular destination for summer holiday-makers with numbers swelling to over 24,000 during the summer months. It is one of four areas EW has identified as priorities for integrated catchment management, with the intention being to develop more effective approaches to managing complex and interrelated issues in such areas.

A number of different agencies have responsibilities for aspects of the Whangamata catchment area:

- Environment Waikato is responsible for managing the Region's
  - Water quality
  - Discharges to air, land and water
  - Contaminated sites
  - Soil conservation
  - Natural hazards, and
  - Activities in the coastal marine area including navigation safety.
- Thames Coromandel District Council is responsible for:
  - Effects of land use and development

<sup>1</sup> Waikato Regional Council

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 2

- Subdivisions
- Structures such as boat ramps and jetties
- Noise control.
- The Department of Conservation owns and manages the harbour floor and the catchment.
- The Hauraki Maori Trust is responsible for:
  - Hauraki Treaty claims
  - Continued responsible management of fisheries
  - Social services
  - Development of the Hauraki Iwi Environmental Plan
  - Investigations into housing, tourism and forestry development, and increased educational opportunities in the area.

In addition, two iwi, Ngati Pu and Ngati Tamatera, have vested interests in the Whangamata harbour and catchment areas as part of their *rohe*<sup>2</sup>, independently of the Hauraki Maori Trust. Ngati Tamatera, in particular, has a claim lodged with the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal in respect of the Whangamata seabed and coast.

Working with these organisations, EW's goal is to establish an overall strategy that addresses issues that go across institutional boundaries, ensuring the local community's views and aspirations are reflected.

### **Participatory Appraisal - What is it?**

Participatory Appraisal (PA) is an approach to community consultation that enables a wide cross section of people to share and record their knowledge or opinions about aspects of their own situations, environments and aspirations, and develop action plans for the future.<sup>3</sup>

It recognises that traditional processes of surveys and public meetings have limited value in capturing the ideas and opinions of communities. PA provides structured processes that ensure there is equal regard for everybody, and all opinions can be expressed in a nonconfrontational

environment. The processes are designed to meet specific, achievable objectives, which can include getting qualitative in-depth information about specific issues, reaching and getting input from stakeholders that are typically excluded from such processes, and having systematic procedures and recording of outcomes.

There is a diverse range of tools, which are largely visual in nature and can be used flexibly to meet the specific objectives of the exercise. They can be employed wherever people are going about their daily lives and routines - supermarkets, schools, pubs, shops, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Rohe* – Boundary, area, physical environment

<sup>3</sup> Sourced from material developed by Andy Inglis, Scottish Participatory Initiatives, Notes from New Zealand Participatory Appraisal Workshop, February 1999

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 3

The PA approach generally includes different combinations of group exercises with ad hoc groups, community groups or workshops, and informal structured interactions with groups and/or individuals. Care is taken to ensure a personal rapport with participants is created, and where possible all outputs are in the writing and words of those involved.

Methods used include participatory mapping, which enables people to visually describe their environment or situation through maps; listing, scoring and ranking exercises, which can be used to establish priorities or levels of importance in the issues under scrutiny; developing diagrams or models which can allow people to identify and describe stakeholder relationships and influence over issues, and so on.

PA is more than just a tool bag of techniques, however. It requires a fundamental shift in the role and attitude of the outside professional, to one where there is a commitment to listen carefully to what local people say and respect the value of local perceptions, issues and priorities, and then to make decisions on the basis of this information.

PA was introduced in New Zealand in February 1999 through a training programme sponsored by the MAF Policy, the Ministry for the Environment, AgResearch, Massey University and Environment Waikato. It has been used to develop environmental management plans, strategic business plans, internal organisational staff surveys, and in a number of small community consultation processes.

### **How did it work in Whangamata?**

Formal approval for the Whangamata LAMS project was given in June 1999, and work commenced in July 1999, with the preparation of work briefs and the design of processes to achieve a high level of community participation and “buy-in”.

EW adopted the PA approach for the development of the Whangamata LAMS for a number of reasons. There had been criticism of EW for not doing enough for the Whangamata community and not listening to or understanding the depth and nature of local concerns, especially in relation to water quality issues and the encroachment of mangroves in the Harbour.

The community had strong divisions within it, with passionate factions. EW wanted a process that “got people working, not arguing”, and the atmosphere of working in workshops appealed. EW wanted to get to people who didn’t go to public meetings – going beyond the vocal minority, and involving people who may not be confidently literate or articulate in expressing their views.

### ***Involving other agencies***

The initial focus of EW was the Harbour Plan. However, other activities in the catchment area affect the harbour but are under the control of different agencies. The issues arising are complex and interrelated. Unfortunately, perhaps, the other agencies were not approached to be involved until after project approval had been given. In retrospect EW would have planned more of a lead-in time to recruit them to take part, working in with their annual planning and budgeting processes and timeframes.

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Among the potential partners, the Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC) had no resourcing available in its annual plan; the Department of Conservation had no resources to contribute; and the Hauraki Maori Trust was committed to preparing its own environmental plan for the whole of its *rohe* (which stretched up to Rodney District above Auckland, down to just north of Tauranga and included the Hauraki Plains). For one other potential agency, the Ministry of Fisheries, the focus on Whangamata was too small for it to commit to being involved.

Although the main agencies were not able to commit resources to the project, they were interested in participating. For example, TCDC had been grappling with issues of how to promote greater community engagement and saw this as being “a doorway to community planning”.

A workshop of the agencies was held in September 1999. This was an opportunity to demonstrate PA techniques in action. The workshop helped identify the scope of the project, in terms of:

- What was working well and not working well in the Whangamata Harbour and catchment
- Previous plans and policies developed in consultation with the Whangamata community
- Key stakeholder relationships in the catchment area
- Considerations for the strategic plan process
- Features of the Whangamata Harbour and catchment, and
- The consultation process that would be followed and its objectives.

The workshop helped agency participants realise the significance of the process they were about to embark on, and also helped establish a sense of inter-agency teamwork. It became apparent to the EW councillors involved that the process would throw up a lot of information that was beyond the scope and ability of EW to address – there seemed to have been an expectation among them that they would only need to address those issues relevant to EW, when the process required a more holistic and integrated look at the issues raised; this initially caused some concern.

There was also a realisation that this process was about listening to the community and doing what it wants, rather than relying on one’s own experience and organisational experts. This was a fundamental change for a number of people. There needed to be a commitment to decisions that are made as a result of the process, and to seeing it through.

#### *Objectives of the consultation*

The project proceeded, however, with the following objectives for the consultation:

- To provide information about community aspirations for Whangamata Harbour catchment and community over the next 20 years
- To capture community definitions of “clean water” and reasons behind them

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

- To identify uses of the harbour – who, where, what
- To identify how people wanted to be further involved in the development of the strategy
- To involve as broad a cross-section of the community in defining aspirations as possible
- To identify the community, catchment and harbour stakeholders.

These objectives helped define the PA tools and techniques to be adopted.

### *PA methods*

Community consultation was held over a seven-day period that included Labour Weekend. This was chosen to ensure that absentee rate-payers (in town for the holiday weekend) and visitors were able to have their say in the process.

The consultation week was launched with a mid-week public meeting, which only around 30 people attended. The remainder of the week was based around a team of seven trained facilitators conducting outreach visits to focus groups, shops, pubs and clubs; drop-in centres and stalls; and street interviews.

The methods for capturing information included the use of structured interviews, mapping, sticky (post-it) notes, “H-forms”, “beans” and timelines. Mapping involved small groups drawing maps of the Whangamata Harbour and catchment, and identifying features on them that they considered important. People recorded their views on colour-coded sticky notes about what they liked or the things that were going well (yellow), dislikes or concerns (pink) and ideas for improvement (green). This information was reported verbatim.

“H-forms” are a method for taking a particular situations or issue, identifying the positives and negatives about it, scoring how well the issue is being addressed, and then making suggestions for improvement (Figure 1, on the next page, illustrates an example, with a picture of an actual sheet used)

“Beans” are a way of prioritising issues. Each person has, say, 10 “beans” to allocate to a range of issues according to the priority they see an issue has. They might give one issue four beans, and two beans to three other less important issues from a list. Once the process is over the total beans for each issue are added up. This method provides a way of identifying what issues are most important to a group of people.

During the week the facilitation team kept track of the age, gender, ethnicity and locality of the people who contributed, and used this information to ensure a wider range of people were contacted. For example, by the end of the second day they realised there were few people, especially women, between the ages of 25 and 45. So, they went to an industrial area and a day care centre to boost numbers in these categories.

By the end of the week’s consultation process the team had captured around 4000 pieces of information from about 650 people!

*DRAFT Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 6

### *Figure 1*

#### *Post-consultation briefing*

Following the consultation week, EW held a feedback workshop for the participating agencies. From this emerged concerns from the Hauraki Maori Trust that iwi had not been adequately (or appropriately) consulted. The Trust agreed to arrange a hui for EW and iwi, at which iwi confirmed these views. The predominant iwi in the area, Ngati Pu and Ngati Tamatera, expressed concerns that as tangata whenua they should have been involved and consulted in their own right, rather than EW working with the Hauraki Maori Trust Board or being consulted as part of the general public consultation process or on the same basis as out-of-towners and visitors to Whangamata.

#### *Collation and analysis*

Following the feedback workshop with the agencies, EW collated all the information into a public document, and made this available through offices of the agencies. The results were presented in two ways – by the venue for receiving the information, and also grouped into broad themes.

## **Sewerage plant too small in summer:**

### **Inadequate waste discharge**

**Negatives** What could be done to improve?

Who could contribute to improvements?

### **Positives**

• • • •

### **0 10**

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 7

#### **Feedback Snippet...**

People who 'have given up' going to public meetings said this process was Excellent!

EW continued to analyse the information from the community and developed a series of draft vision statements. It added factual information about the issues raised, and published the draft vision statements in a brochure to all residents and rate-payers. People were asked whether they agreed with the vision statements proposed, and to attend a public workshop to check the vision statement were right, look at conflicts in the visions and to set priorities for what happened next.

#### *Turning it into action plans*

While the responses to the draft vision statements indicated a large measure of agreement (average 87%), the public workshop was not able to provide definitive answers to allow actions to be finalised. As a result, a series of community forums are to be held, run jointly by EW and TCDC, focusing on specific topics of interest. It is anticipated that these forums will allow people to get involved in the issues that particularly interest and affect them. Outputs from the forums will help to identify issues, actions, responsibilities, timeframes

and costs, to enable a final strategic plan for the community to be ready in February 2001.

A workshop with iwi will also develop detail of how the appropriate iwi will be involved in the plan development.

### **What did the people think?**

EW as received a lot of favourable feedback from members of the public who participated in the process. A number of these are captured in "Feedback Snippets", and illustrated in Figure 2.

#### *Figure 2*

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 8

#### **Feedback Snippet...**

I'm quite excited by it all. You can take a pat on the back, you've done the right thing, and I think a lot of good stuff will come out of it.

#### **Feedback Snippet...**

Tangata whenua thought the process was awesome.  
Kanohi te kanohi.

Among the various agencies involved there was a range of reactions. For the Whangamata Community Board Chairperson(also a Thames Coromandel District Councillor), it was a great

process for getting the public involved, where previously there had been a degree of apathy among the community. A lot of information was uncovered, and it was an excellent process for finding out where the community wants to go. He observed that there is now a need for EW to work closely with the Community Board and TCDC in deciding how the information is to be processed and used, integrating the issues into a community plan. This will provide a common direction for the community and the process followed will encourage a greater sense of ownership of that direction. For the iwi and hapu involved, Ngati Tamatera and Ngati Pu, their reactions were mixed. On the one hand there were concerns about the extent to which they were consulted and able to participate, and recognition of their status and responsibilities as tangata whenua. The draft vision statements were also felt to be more targeted towards out-of-towners than the immediate hapu/Maori community, with not much input into them by Maori. On the other hand, there were positive views about the good information that was gathered, the identification of issues and people agreeing what was important, and the recognition arising from the process of the need to further communicate and develop relationships between EW, the Whangamata community and tangata whenua. There was also recognition that a lot of people had already done a lot of good work on the problems that iwi had identified to EW, and that iwi needed to be more involved to learn about this. EW was therefore seen as having a role to ensure the different interest groups are talking to each other and sharing information so that each knows what the others are doing.

The Hauraki Maori Trust are somewhat ambivalent about the outcomes, having intentions of completing their own environmental plan for their *kohe*, with Whangamata being only one small part. However, the Trust did see the process that was followed as being the chance to stress the correct processes to follow in talking with the right people and iwi, which will help overcome future problems or difficulties.

For TCDC, the process linked nicely with its own thinking about ways to engage the community, and develop its approach to community planning. Their late involvement in the process, however, tempered their ability to participate fully, although in the new financial year they have targeted resources to working with EW more closely to develop the “community plan” for Whangamata, and act on the issues raised.

The lack of involvement in leading up to the process also raised some concerns about how the process would affect ongoing projects TCDC had underway for the Whangamata community, and in particular whether the process would re-open debate on issues that had already been dealt with in getting to a point in selecting options for wastewater treatment.

*DRAFT Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 9

**Feedback Snippet...**

It's one of the best things  
that's been done in Whanga  
for a long time.

It was also unclear how the outputs of the process would sit in relation to statutory documents such as the District Plan.

Among benefits of the process, TCDC saw it as getting a good handle on the range of things that were important to the Whangamata community, although there was no sense of

“weighting” of the issues for the depth of interest of participants (e.g. casual visitors vs. permanent residents). It also thought the process was quite resource intensive, which could be a burden for small councils such as itself.

TCDC sees its role can be to facilitate process for future community planning, providing the expertise and resources to keep the momentum going. The benefits of having a community plan that represents the aspirations of the community include de-politicising of the district planning process and providing an agreed framework for judging future options and developments. Should variations to the District Plan be required as a result of this process, the community plan will be a good supporting document for arguments in favour of a variation. It will still not override the statutory provisions requiring notification and opportunity to comment to be given to all affected parties, however, and rights of appeal.

### **What have been the outcomes?**

The process is as yet incomplete. EW and TCDC are about to embark on the series of community forums to address a range of key issues that were identified in the PA process, with the goal of achieving agreement about action plans to address these. The workshops are being designed to develop the community’s understanding of the linkages among the issues that were identified and build progressively to a coherent plan. The first of these workshops was held in July 2000, and the output from the forums, which will identify issues, actions, responsibilities, timeframes and costs, is expected to be ready by February 2001.

EW itself has learned a great deal from this process. These lessons will be described more fully below. However, one important point to come out of the process was a resolution by the EW Council that it recognises that the plan produced by the forums will be the agreed community direction for Whangamata, and that EW’s policies and actions will be consistent with that where possible.

In the meantime, other outcomes to date have been:

- A database of some 4,000 pieces of information about the views and aspirations of the Whangamata community
  - The involvement of around 650 members of the wider community contributing their ideas
  - All the issues of interest to the community have been gathered up by this process
  - Clarification of the roles, relationships and communications needs of the tangata whenua of Whangamata harbour and catchment area, and the Hauraki Maori Trust
- DRAFT Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 10

- A model for community engagement has been demonstrated for the TCDC to adopt in future community planning exercises
- The process has raised the profile of both EW and TCDC in the community after there has been much criticism.

### **Keys ingredients for success**

So, what have been the key ingredients for the success of this process and the lessons learned? These have been grouped into several common areas:

- Preparation and planning
- Building support and commitment
- Engagement with Maori
- Engagement with the community

- Process and communication issues.

### *Preparation and planning*

One of the key lessons learned by EW is that it would plan more of a lead-in time to the process, getting partners on board and aiming to link in to their planning, decision-making and budgeting processes. This will be important if key stakeholders are to be involved and participate fully, and properly. There is also a need to understand where potential partners existing priorities, initiatives and programmes are at, to avoid (or minimise) the potential for apparent conflicts.

The application of a process such as PA to the development of a community based strategy for the future management and development of a community's infrastructure, environment and resources means agencies with different responsibilities for interdependent features of that environment cannot work in isolation from each other. The issues that come out will overlap areas of responsibility, so there is a need to integrate planning.

It is, therefore, important to carefully design the objectives and define what the process is trying to achieve. It will help get the commitment of key decision-makers if they can be assured that information will be gathered to achieve the agreed objectives.

Preparation and planning also needs to address how the information will be used and how decisions based on it will sit in relation to the statutory framework of the Resource Management Act. For example the information can be used to assist changes but cannot override statutory processes. The expectations of the community may need to be managed in this respect.

### *Building support and commitment*

Learning about the process starts in-house. Don't assume internal people understand what the process will throw up in terms of information or issues! For staff running the process, *DRAFT Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 11

advice is to not start without getting the support and understanding of the key decisionmakers.

Build commitments to the objectives and to act on the outcomes of the process.

The key decision-makers – senior management and politicians – need to fully understand the process and its implications. Once an organisation embarks on the process of asking the community for its views and to decide what it wants for itself, the organisation must commit to respecting and implementing those directions rather than relying on what the "experts" say is good for them (if there is a fundamental difference, then there needs to be an education and information sharing process).

Often this may involve a loss of power or control that some people may not be entirely comfortable with. Understanding this may require time to digest, debate and come to grips with the issues and implications of the process. The process, its benefits and goals need to be translated into language the relevant audience understands, and where possible building in opportunities to experience the process for themselves.

However, this must also be balanced with the need to maintain momentum, so there are not lengthy periods when nothing appears to be happening – otherwise people go off the boil, lose interest and motivation – it becomes just another fad.

Another ingredient for success is to build champions of the process. This involves using the influential people in the community, developing relationships with them and linking into their networks to ensure support for the process and its outcomes, and an appropriate cross-section of participation is achieved. This must also be balanced with the need to ensure the process is open, democratic and participatory.

### *Engagement with Maori*

Understanding the dynamics among iwi and other Maori organisations is important for embarking on a process of community planning such as this. Which organisation or iwi is responsible for what, and who can commit or make decisions on behalf of whom needs to be understood at the outset. If in doubt, it may be desirable to invite all iwi individually to indicate whether they should be consulted in relation to an area or issue (as Hauraki Maori Trust has advised all Councils within its rohe), and let those iwi decide and indicate for themselves. Often, rohe boundaries are not clear-cut and there may be a number of different iwi or hapu to deal with.

There is a need for organisations to understand Maori decision-making processes when fulfilling their role as *kaitiaki*<sup>4</sup> of their *rohe*, and the time frames for these. More discussions early in any process will help to avoid later problems, misunderstandings of the issues and resistance to proposals.

Knowing about the existence and status of any Treaty claims on the area in focus is essential. At the very least, iwi with Treaty claims will have an interest in what is being proposed for the area, and its own aspirations for the future. The existence of a claim may also influence how iwi want to assert themselves in any consultation process.

<sup>4</sup> *Kaitiaki* – manager, caretaker, trustee

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 12

The ability to participate and contribute to a consultation process by local iwi may be constrained by a lack of resources. If the appropriate tools and resources are not available to tangata whenua so they can contribute and participate, there will be resistance and antipathy towards an effort to call a process “consultation”.

Sufficient notice is required for iwi/hapu representatives to be involved and able to speak on behalf of their iwi/hapu. There is a greater sense of collective responsibility, particularly on issues affecting an iwi or hapu’s rohe and kaitiaki. Last minute or very short notice of an event may also be interpreted as an afterthought invitation, not calculated to inspire belief that an organisation is committed to consultation with anyone, let alone tangata whenua.

Consideration needs to be given to the venue for meetings – who hosts them, whether they should be on “neutral” ground or the predominant iwi/hapu for the area, etc.

Understanding and respecting the appropriate protocols eliminates one possible source of resistance to hearing new ideas or proposals. Personal contact is also important, in addition to the more formal hui context.

For some iwi greater consultation and participation over the development of plans such as the Whangamata Community Plan requires more than providing documentation and draft plans to read – site visits to show what’s happening, participating as observers to monitoring processes were suggested as ways to enhance iwi participation.

### *Engagement with the community*

Council staff need to be involved and seen to be there at the community level to understand the perspectives and issues for the community. They can’t sit back in their offices in a remote location and make decisions for what’s best for a community. Fronting up consistently sends signals that you mean what you say, the process is important and we are listening to what the community is saying. EW did well in this respect.

Keeping an independent stance, and not appearing to favour certain interests is also seen as important. For example turning up at some interest group meetings and not others can affect how the left out parties view the credibility of attempts to involve and consult them.

The timing of meetings and workshops is important – weekends are often more appropriate for community participants, given their own work commitments. Even if these may be less convenient for organisations, it still sends signals about the degree of commitment the organisation has to involving the community

### *Process and communications issues*

Good communication in support of any consultation process is critical. Of particular relevance to this study, there needs to be an open and honest exchange of information between communities and councils, so each knows where the other is coming from and fears about hidden agendas are minimised. Information has to be provided by local authorities to the community about the range of possibilities, so that the communities decisions are well-informed, rather than “knee-jerk reactions”.

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*

Page 13

The choice of words is particularly important in any consultation and communication process. The wrong choice of words, even unintentionally, can result in misunderstandings and breaches of trust – particularly if the experiences of the parties listening haven’t been favourable in the past and a good degree of trust has not been built up.

With regard to the PA approach, the outreach process was critical – “meeting people on their own turf”. If the people don’t come to you, you need to go out to where they live and work and encourage them to become involved.

The independence and neutrality of the facilitators is important. Facilitators must skilled, capturing information as it is given, rather than re-interpreting it or debating the views given. This is not to say that facilitators cannot be staff of the agencies involved; there needs to be integrity in applying the PA methodology.

Another issue to consider is the timing of the consultation process to ensure all the relevant stakeholder groups have the opportunity to contribute. In this case EW identified that absentee rate-payers were an important stakeholder group, and that a holiday weekend would ensure their views could be captured within the process.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that this is a long-term process, which does not end with the completion of a plan. There needs to be in place an appropriate monitoring mechanism to be able to demonstrate that the parties are achieving what they set out to achieve. The plan will need to be adjusted as circumstances change, or if new information about the environment or community comes to light and must be taken into account.

### **Conclusion**

PA was found to be an extremely useful approach for gathering information about a wide range of community views on what can be complex issues. It is important, however, to go into the process with eyes wide open and clearly identify the objectives of the process and the outcomes being sought. It is also critical to understand the implications of asking the community what it wants, and the expectations that this creates on decision-makers. How will the information be used and fit into decision-making processes? How does the process fit in relation to other legal frameworks? To what extent are decision-makers prepared to commit to implementing the community’s aspirations? These are important issues to consider at the outset, and commencing such a process without understanding them may lead to unmanageable expectations and, inevitably, disappointment, cynicism and distrust.

### **For more information...**

Alan Campbell Ph: (07) 856 0556 Ext 8873

Project Leader Fax: (07) 856 0551

Environment Waikato Email: [alanc@wairc.govt.nz](mailto:alanc@wairc.govt.nz)

PO Box 4010  
Hamilton East

DRAFT *Environment Waikato – Participatory Appraisal*  
Page 14

For information on Participatory Appraisal, contact:

Annie Perkins Ph: (07) 856 0556 Ext 8846

Environmental Education Facilitator

Environment Waikato Email: [annie.perkins@ew.govt.nz](mailto:annie.perkins@ew.govt.nz)

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their assistance and support in preparing this case study:

- Alan Campbell, Project Leader, Environment Waikato
- Annie Perkins, Environmental Education Facilitator, EW
- Roy Piahana, Ngati Tamatera
- Peter Te Moananui, Hauraki Maori Trust Board
- Hazel Martin, Ngati Pu
- Peter Wishart, Forward Planning Manager, TCDC
- Brian Grant, Chairperson, Whangamata Community Board and Thames Coromandel District Councillor

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