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# PULSE HOTU MANAWA

The electronic magazine from the New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# LGA changes imminent

By Karen Thomas  
SOLGM Chief Executive

**I'm expecting that the *Local Government Amendment Bill 2012* may very well be law by the time this edition of *Pulse* is published.**

The Select Committee's hearing and consideration of submissions produced very little change to the *Bill*. The Committee is evenly split between Government and Opposition members, and consequently could not reach a majority agreement on most matters, including all of the substantive issues.

While it may be disappointing that such issues were not resolved, the Committee did note in its report the comments from SOLGM and LGNZ about the lack of an evidence base to support the assertions about alleged fiscal imprudence and

expansion into non-core activity, as well as SOLGM's comments on the poor quality of the *Regulatory Impact Statement*.

The changes the Select Committee agreed to were:

- Insertion of a safeguard on the exercise of some mayoral powers – the council may override mayoral decisions on the appointment of a deputy mayor, committee chairs and committee structures.
- Councils must report their intended and actual performance against the fiscal parameters and benchmarks.
- The Department of Internal Affairs may make regulations specifying whether benchmarks apply to the "core council" or "group".
- Minor changes to the process for correcting typographical and clerical errors in reorganisation schemes.



In addition to the changes, the Government also made a large number of amendments in the Committee of the House Stage which included:

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# LGA changes imminent

- Two changes to definition of a problem. One restores “significant or persistent failure to meet statutory obligations” as a trigger for a problem. The second, amends the Act so that failure to adhere to a benchmark in and of itself is not a problem.
- Several changes to appointment procedures for the different types of intervention. A further amendment clarifies that the list of interventions is a menu not a hierarchy, once a significant problem has been established, the Minister may select from the menu as desired and is not obliged to choose one form before putting in another
- some technical changes that allow for the incorporation of accounting standards and other material into the fiscal threshold regulations. Contrary to some advice from other sector organisations, the provision to set regulations is still part of the

legislation and is still a work in progress. The date when the thresholds take effect will be specified in the regulation

- a new section lists the types of reorganisation proposals that can be made. The list is very broadly drawn, but we have advised those councils working on proposals to check that their proposals meet one or more of the items on that list
- local authorities will now have a statutory duty to cooperate with the Commission – including meeting reasonable requests for information and assistance
- the threshold of significant community support has been amended. The Commission now must look for “demonstrable support” – as the definition of demonstrable is “able to be shown or proved” this does appear to lower the threshold, especially as it is also made clear the Commission need not

establish majority support. Demonstrable support must exist in each affected area, not across the total area

- there is a new and wider definition of affected area. It seems to clarify that in cases where two or more local authorities in a region want to set up a unitary, that the entire region is affected and has a right to trigger a poll. The period for collecting signatures has been extended to 60 working days, i.e. 12 weeks. We suspect the practical effect of this is that most proposals that get past the demonstrable support and good local government tests will go to a poll
- the threshold for triggering a poll has been lowered, it is now 10 percent of any of the affected TAs. A successful proposal will still be one that gets 50 percent plus one of the votes across the entire affected area.

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# LGA changes imminent

To date, SOLGM has been helping local authorities through the Phase 1. We have held successful BLG summits and information webinars.

We have also been proactively providing input into the *Bill* through its submissions and assistance to a reference group established by DIA and LGNZ on the department's proposed fiscal thresholds. SOLGM has also lodged a proactive submission to the Efficiency Taskforce.

## What's in it for you?

This *Bill* has significant implications in the way you do things in your local authority. SOLGM will help you through the process and we have the following activities in the pipeline to provide that assistance:

- SOLGM will prepare some guidance to help local authorities interpret the new statement of purpose. This will be released as soon as practicable after

completion of the Committee of the House stage

- SOLGM may hold another webinar on 19 December depending on the release of the Efficiency Taskforce report.

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## CHIEF EXECUTIVES FORUM

Save the date

**Tuesday, 28 May 2013, Wellington**

Save the date on your calendars for the annual Chief Executives Forum in Wellington on 28 May. This forum may be the first time you as a group will get together following the enactment of the *Local Government Act Amendment Bill* into law. The forum will also feature international perspectives as we have already confirmed that Bonnie Svrcek, ICMA President and Deputy City Manager of City of Lynchburg, Virginia, will be joining us at the forum and we are waiting to hear back from SOLACE President Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council if he will be joining us.

Click [here](#) to download the appointment to your Outlook Calendar

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BILL REFERRED TO SELECT COMMITTEE

# Local Electoral Bill

By Raymond Horan  
Principal Advisor

**The Local Electoral Amendment Bill 2012 received its first reading on 6 November. It has been referred to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee for consideration.**

The Bill tightens the rules around anonymous donations, and essentially aligns the local election requirements with those that apply to Parliamentary elections. Candidates can not accept an anonymous donation of more than \$1500, any amount in excess of that must be paid to the local authority holding the election. Any person accepting a donation on behalf of a candidate, such as a campaign manager, must tell the candidate of the identity of the donor if this is known. And

the definition of anonymous donations has been amended so that a donation is anonymous if the candidate does not know the identity of the donor, or could not be reasonably expected to know the identity of the donor.

This Bill also incorporates the procedural and technical amendments that were in the Bill the Hon Rodney Hide introduced into Parliament just before Parliament rose for the 2011 general elections. These were:

- moving nomination day to the 57th day before election day (i.e. nomination day is a week earlier). Note that this means that the date on which the pre-election report is due also would move a week forward
- requiring candidates to provide a properly completed nomination form, their candidate profile statement, and the deposit at the same time
- permitting the adjournment of an

election in circumstances where a national or local emergency has adverse effects that might deny voters a reasonable opportunity to vote, or to be nominated as a candidate. This would be done by order in council

- requiring voting documents to provide a warning of offences in relation to a voting document (e.g. filling out someone else's document without proper authority)
- repealing the requirement for local authorities to authorise early processing of voted by resolution – the returning officer would be empowered to make that decision on their own initiative
- prohibiting withdrawals from elections once nomination day has passed – nominations can be canceled only in the event of death or incapacity
- empowering territorial authorities to make minor alterations to boundaries



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BILL REFERRED TO SELECT COMMITTEE

# Local Electoral Bill

of wards or communities in certain circumstances. The same power is extended to regional councils in respect of constituency boundaries

- requiring that public notice of all proposed representation reviews must include the communities of interest considered in the review, and the ratio of population per elected member, and the reasons for those proposals.

Given the Government's stated desire to have the amendments to donations rules enacted for the 2013 local government elections, the consultation process is short. Submissions should go to the Clerk of the Justice and Electoral Select Committee by 21 December 2012.

With the exception of the anonymous donations issue, the matters in this Bill are procedural and technical in nature, and are matters that SOLGM has raised

in its submissions to the last three Select Committee inquiries into local elections. Our submission is likely to be short, and largely favourable. Staff consider the anonymous donations issue is a political matter, and therefore not appropriate for SOLGM to take a supporting or opposing position.

SOLGM's Electoral Working Party will be considering the submission when it meets on 10 December. We have circulated a draft, comments on that draft should be sent to Raymond Horan by 30 November. We particularly welcome comments of a technical nature – noting again SOLGM in on public record advocating for much of the Bill.

## NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVES

SOLGM congratulates the following people who have been recently appointed Chief Executives:

- **Clare Hadley** is appointed the new Chief Executive of Nelson City Council. She takes up the position in December.
- **Wayne Barnett** has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Mackenzie District Council. He replaces Glen Innes who is retiring this month.
- **Peter Bodeker** is the new Chief Executive of Otago Regional Council. He replaced Graeme Martin who retired last month.

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## MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

# Not your traditional training

**The Local Government Management Challenge is a sophisticated professional development opportunity that is specifically designed for local government. It has been running for 20 years now and continues to be relevant to local authorities in Australia and New Zealand.**

### Real life scenarios

This is not your typical seminar or workshop where the participants just sit and listen to a speaker. This is a hands-on development opportunity with real life challenges. The team members roll up their sleeves and work on tasks that are based on situations that they may normally encounter in their day to day work at council.

Last year, the teams were asked to share knowledge management processes in their

organisation and identify the strengths and weakness of each councils approach. In the end, they had a list of ideas that they can bring back to their own local authorities to consider.

Another task revolved around stress management. The team was asked to be the 'senior management team' and to develop a strategy on supporting employees experiencing work related stress.

### Team work

The challenge works best for team with a diverse range of members. It allows less experienced staff to work with those with more experience. It can promote team work across and between departments. And more importantly, it can provide your team members the opportunity to know about what others do in the organisation and how each role contribute to council operations.

This team work carries over even after the

challenge and has enduring benefits for the organisation at large.

### Mentoring

A senior manager of of a council may act as a mentor for the participating team. Mike Maguire, Group Manager Corporate and Customer Services, was the team mentor for Team Synergy (Hastings District Council) in this year's challenge. He says that being the team mentor for young and older people who are endeavouring to grow 'is the most rewarding experience in his local government career.'

### Not for the faint hearted

Who does not like a bit of competition? The challenge is fun and competitive. The teams compete against each other, and the winner of the New Zealand leg competes at the Australasian Final against Australian state winners.

The challenge also takes you out of your



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## MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

# Not your traditional training

comfort zone. Team Synergy's Team Leader, Shane Lambert, Senior Environmental Planner says "one of the hardest lessons that I learnt was sometimes you have to stick your neck out. You are not always going to get things right. This can leave you feeling vulnerable. But you can be strong when you are right, but you can be as strong when you are wrong when your team is supporting you."

### What's next

Are you ready for the ultimate challenge?

- Call for expressions of interest within council from staff members who want take part
- If you can not form a team from within your council, tap your neighbouring council or even non-council organisations to form a joint team
- Get the support of your Chief Executive and the senior management team

- Register your team at [www.managementchallenge.com.au](http://www.managementchallenge.com.au)

### Important details

- Pre-challenge task – February-March 2013
- Challenge day (NZ) – week of 18-29 March, locations TBC
- Australasian Final (Melbourne) – 20-21 June 2013 (winner of the NZ leg)
- Entry fee is NZ\$4740

For more information contact:  
Don Mackay, [dmackay@solgm.org.nz](mailto:dmackay@solgm.org.nz) or  
04 978-1258.

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Watch the video [link](#) from Team Synergy, Hastings District Council, the winner of the 2012 Australasian Finals.

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## JOIN US

for a webinar to learn more about the challenge, on 11 December at 10am.  
Click [here](#).

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SOLGM OPUS BUSINESS SCHOOL

# Upcoming events



## Benchmarking Forum

Discuss and form your council's response on DIA's exposure draft on mandatory performance measures for roads and footpaths; the three waters and flood protection/river control. This consultation forum is your chance to hear about the proposal, the whys, and also to let us know what SOLGM, LGNZ and Ingenium should consider as we put together our own feedback to DIA.

Auckland Forum, 4 December

[link](#)

Palmerston North Forum, 5 December

[link](#)

Christchurch Forum, 12 December

[link](#)

## Electoral Officers' Training

Get up to speed on what electoral officers need to know as you prepare for the 2013 local elections. Learn about the implications

of the *Local Electoral Amendment Bill* which is currently before the House. This is a must for local authorities' electoral officers.

12-13 February, Wellington

[link](#)

## EA/PAs in Local Government

This annual event is a professional development opportunity for all executive assistants and personal assistants in local government. This event will focus on issues, topics and trends that are most relevant to your work. Mark your calendars now!

7-8 March, Wellington

[link](#)

## CONTACT US

Do you have any ideas for training that you would like us to help you with?

If so, please contact:

Don Mackay

[dmackay@solgm.org.nz](mailto:dmackay@solgm.org.nz)

or

Fiona McDonald

[fmcdonald@solgm.org.nz](mailto:fmcdonald@solgm.org.nz)

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TOP STUDENTS

# Academic prize giving

**Sara Bailey has been awarded the 2012 SOLGM/Local Government Careers Academic Prize in Engineering at the University of Auckland for achieving the highest combined grade in CIVIL360 (Transportation Engineering 1) and CIVIL361 (Transportation Engineering 2).**

The award presentation was on 13 November at the university and was attended by students and other companies who were also handing out awards. More than 10 companies have sponsored different types of awards for top-performing students, an indication that there continues to be high demand for engineering students not just in local government, but also in other sectors, including roading,



Sara Brooke Bailey, above, with Phil Wilson, SOLGM Executive Member Northern, who presented her award at the University of Auckland.



SOLGM Deputy Chief Executive Don Mackay with Victoria University students Thomas Stuart (above right) and Henry Graham (right) who received the 2012 SOLGM/Local Government Careers Academic Prize for achieving the highest mark in Introduction to Policy (PUBL201).

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TOP STUDENTS

# Academic prize giving



manufacturing, urban design and much more.

At Victoria University of Wellington, Henry Graham and Thomas Stuart received the 2012 SOLGM/Local Government Careers Academic Prize for achieving the highest mark in Introduction to Policy (PUBL201).

## LET US KNOW

If your local authority is also giving out awards at various universities, please let us know. Get in touch with Janice Nadew at SOLGM – [jnadew@solgm.org.nz](mailto:jnadew@solgm.org.nz)

## Auckland Council partners with university

Low Impact Design is an inter-disciplinary design approach to stormwater management that operates at complementary scales of the region, the catchment, and the site for planning and land development. Low Impact Design seeks to protect, enhance and ultimately utilise natural systems and processes for enhanced stormwater management, ecosystem services and community outcomes.

In 2006, then Auckland Regional Council partnered with the University of Auckland and Housing New Zealand to run a competition among students to develop a low impact design solution on a hypothetical development. Now, Auckland Council still sponsors the project (Housing New Zealand pulled out after three years) and the Low Impact Design project is now built into the course and forms part of the evaluation.

The students may work on a hypothetical development, but they will be working on a location where actual development or redevelopment is taking place. This year the site was located at Beachlands, where Greenfield residential development is proposed.

The students are given an area, topographical layout of the site, and the number of dwellings of different types that they must accommodate. They are challenged to design the development, minimising the effect on the hydrological cycle, and at the same time considering good urban form to create a liveable space, aligning with mayoral aspirations to make Auckland the world's most liveable city.

■ For more information, contact: Judy-Ann Ansen, Manager Stormwater Technical Services, Auckland Council.  
E: [judy-ann.ansen@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:judy-ann.ansen@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

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SOLGM MASTERCLASS

# Greener Sydney

**SOLGM**  
NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

***"Whenever I visit a new city, I take photos not just of cityscapes and public art, but more so of pavements, footpaths and manhole coverings. I suppose you have similar photos on your phone."***

Monica Barone addressed the group of local government managers and elected members who attended the Sustainable Sydney 2030 Masterclass on 19 November in Wellington. Monica, Chief Executive of the City of Sydney and her partner Peter, also a local government manager, were in New Zealand at the invitation of SOLGM to deliver a Masterclass.

The City of Sydney is home to about 180,000 residents, however the city has to plan and look after almost one million people who are in the city everyday including workers and tourists. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is



Masterclass panel discussion participants, from left, Sue Bidrose of Dunedin City Council, Penny Hulse of Auckland Council, and Gael Ferguson of Kapiti Coast District Council, with Monica Barone.



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SOLGM MASTERCLASS

# Greener Sydney



the community vision and blueprint for the city, now and into the future. Established in 2008 through community consultations, the people have spoken that they want a city that is “green, global and connected”. And now that vision is becoming a reality.

“And when they say green, they mean green as having lots of trees and plants. So we have an urban forest strategy, tree management policy and we are currently in consultation on a draft footpath policy. But the people also wanted an infrastructure to make the city environmentally sustainable, so we developed the green infrastructure masterplan.”

The big masterplan includes local action plans which are projects in the 10 villages surrounding the city. Each village is unique and the council put in the extra effort to consult with the communities and empower them to take action and make their own

communities green, global and connected. The residents have embraced this and worked with council to enhance public spaces.

Monica and her team have taken an approach of measuring and using evidence to back up their ideas. They measure everything, they count the number of pedestrians crossing the road, and they evaluate their projects regularly.

“I don’t go to my council unless I have evidence and hard facts to back up my proposal.”

With 75 percent of emissions in Australia generated from cities, particularly from commercial buildings, the City of Sydney is leading the way in tackling climate change and has set a bold target of reducing carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030. The city aims to create a network of trigeneration plants to provide power, heating and

With 75 percent of emissions in Australia generated from cities, particularly from commercial buildings, the City of Sydney is leading the way in tackling climate change and has set a bold target of reducing carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030.

cooling to buildings that is produced locally which is 85 percent more efficient compared to power generated from a national grid. They started installing this system in their own buildings like the Town Hall.

The council established the Better Buildings Partnership – a partnership between the city



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SOLGM MASTERCLASS

# Greener Sydney



council and the 13 major property owners who own more than 60 percent of the buildings in the city. This is the first time the council is working with major property owners to actively take a leadership role in reducing carbon emission and work together to achieve a greener city.

Monica talked about the challenges they face in this journey. As they were rolling out the Liveable Green Network, a pedestrian and cycling network that connects to city or village centres, they were inundated by complaints from property and business owners who anticipated losing parking spaces and were concerned about their property values dropping.

“Now, real estate agents are using this as a selling point and we have people ringing us asking when will they get their own Liveable Green Network.”

The council releases a quarterly report to

the public that covers every target area. And sometimes they just have to be upfront when they failed to meet their targets.

All around the world, local governments face similar problems, but the solutions are different. Not because one is right and the other is wrong, but because our solutions are place-based. It is great that we have examples from around the world to look at and use as inspirations so we can use some of to understand what will work for our communities.

“Focus on things that people can see and touch, you know beautification, trees and flowers. That is what people will remember. And use that to tell the story why you need to spend on the invisible stuff.”

## USEFUL RESOURCES

Sustainable Sydney 2030 Website  
click [here](#)

Better Buildings Partnership Website  
click [here](#)

Information on Trigeneration  
click [here](#)

2030 in your Village  
click [here](#)



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LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

# 'Refreshing, insightful'

By Monique Davidson  
Community Development Manager  
Horowhenua District Council

**Kiaora koutou katoa. Two weeks ago I returned to work after an incredibly refreshing and insightful Leadership in Practice residential. I had the privilege of joining 15 highly respected public sector leaders, including two other council managers, while reflecting on my own leadership style, what I need to do to be a greater leader and the contribution that I can make to local government in the future.**

The programme now continues for a further nine months, where I have the opportunity to participate in monthly coaching and action learning groups.

The Leadership in Practice residential, with Monique Davidson second row from the bottom at right. To her right (orange top) is Tania Harris, Canterbury Regional Council, and back row third from right is Sandy Graham, Dunedin City Council.



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LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

# 'Refreshing, insightful'



My sincere thanks to the SOLGM Executive and staff for giving me the opportunity to participate in this programme. Over the duration of the programme I will be sharing my learnings and providing you all with an update on the journey.

When reflecting on what to share with you all I came across this quote:

*"The thought of being a leader may seem like an appealing idea to the ego, but the reality is that authentic leadership scares the ego death – it means we care so much about a higher purpose, a higher principle, a higher goal that we are willing to make the most important risks and sacrifices for the sake of what we are aspiring to accomplish. It means we care so passionately about others also reaching that goal that we unhesitantly sacrifice our own piece of mind, comfort and security in order for them to flourish" (www.andrewcohen.org).*

The challenge we face as leaders within local government is how do we be authentic in our leadership style? When do we take the time to get off the "dance floor", take a walk up the stairs and view leadership, life and work from the balcony?

Imagine the different perspective we may have.

Local government needs authentic leaders – when we are authentic in our style only then can we embrace change and drive innovative strategic solutions in the "doing more with less" environment we all face.

Nga mihi.

■ *Leadership in Practice is a programme by Leadership Development Centre specifically designed for the public sector.*

## NEWS TIP?

**Got any news tips on council projects receiving an award or a staff member being recognised for the work they do?**

**Share your story by emailing Janice Nadew at [jnadew@solgm.org.nz](mailto:jnadew@solgm.org.nz)**



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS



# Celebrating excellence

**So many examples of excellence and innovation in local government go unrecognised. At a time when the sector is facing scrutiny on fiscal responsibility and questions on the purpose and role of local government are being asked, this is a great time to showcase achievements and leading practice within local government.**

Celebrating our successes is something local government need to start doing more. Often times, we get so caught up with the daily grind of our work and keeping up with the demands of our community, that we fail to stop and recognise the good work we do, and more importantly, the extraordinary effort that individuals have put into their work.

The recently concluded SOLGM GHD Local Government Excellence Awards celebrate and recognise local government projects that showcase leading practice, innovation and excellence.

The 30 entries received this year are really just the tip of the iceberg that represent leading practice and excellence.

The following pages in this section showcase the projects that won or received a commendation. All 30 entries are now available on the SOLGM website for you to download. Have a read – you may find some new ideas or inspiration that will add value to your work in local government.

Click [here](#) to go to the Excellence Awards entries on the SOLGM website.



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AUCKLAND

# Rugby World Cup

By Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development in partnership with Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, Waterfront Auckland and Regional Facilities Auckland

**The entry "Auckland's Rugby World Cup 2011 Programme" entered by Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development, won the category *Joined Up Local Government* and was the overall supreme winner of the 2012 SOLGM GHD Government Excellence Awards.**

The judges commented that the huge scale of a project being carried out in the public eye created an enormous amount of pressure and that the project was carried out successfully.

The Rugby World Cup is the third largest sporting event in the world and the 2011

tournament was New Zealand's biggest ever sporting event. Auckland hosted the opening and closing ceremonies and 15 matches, as well as three relocated matches following the Christchurch earthquake.

Auckland's host city role ranged from fanzones and team welcomes, to training venues, transport planning, infrastructure upgrades, visitor services, business programmes and city operations, to community engagement programmes. The project focused on the co-ordination of Auckland's numerous roles in hosting the Rugby World Cup. It was a response to the sheer size of the event and the economic and development benefits that come with it.

The result was a huge success, with an economic impact of \$512M with 114,000 overseas visitors going to Auckland.

View the [link](#) to the programme.



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RUAPEHU DISTRICT COUNCIL

# River Valley engagement



**The entry “Ruapehu River Valley Land Transport Community Engagement Model” entered by Ruapehu District Council, was the winner of the *Council Community Relationships* category.**

RDC’s Team Leader Land Transport, Warren Furner, said: “The programme provides a focus on doing the right repair at the right time to the right quality, rather than budget constraints encouraging short-term solutions with greater long term costs and lower performance.”

RDC is one of New Zealand’s largest territorial authorities by land area but with one of the smallest permanent population counts. As a large rural district, Ruapehu has a large number of very small, diverse and geographically spread out communities. For Ruapehu’s remote rural communities, RDC’s Land Transport activity is seen as the

critical activity in ensuring their viability and sustainability.

In 2009 RDC’s Land Transport team began the ‘River Valley Module’ where they talked to rural communities about where they had safety, efficiency or reliability concerns on their local roads. Local road users were urged to identify sites that were of a concern to them and these sights were put into the road work programmes and completed.

The rationale for the project was past dissatisfaction of Ruapehu’s rural communities with who felt they were not getting value for money from their rate payments. The result is the ‘River Valley Module’ has significantly improved rural community perceptions of RDC and the role they play in supporting their viability.

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ROTORUA DISTRICT COUNCIL

# Continuous improvement



**The entry of Rotorua District Council (RDC), "Continuous Improvement through Lean Thinking", won the *Building Organisational Capability* category.**

The judges saw the project as a step along a path, saying: "It has the potential to be genuinely transformational in terms of the capacity for the council to deliver services effectively for its community."

In 2010 RDC recognised that changes were needed to better service the needs of the Rotorua community. It was evident that times were becoming increasingly tighter for residents and ratepayers, and RDC responded by exploring opportunities to provide better local services for less.

They discovered Lean Thinking, a continuous improvement model that seeks to eliminate waste and improve efficiency.



The RDC's Aquatic Centre was selected as a "quick win", small-scale demonstration project, as the basis for a continual improvement culture being diffused throughout the organisation.

The Lean Thinking project has quickly and significantly increased the performance and effectiveness of the Aquatic Centre's processes. It has also increased transparency

and actively engaged its employees in finding ways to work better, faster and smarter.

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HASTINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL

# 'Walk it, bike it, love it'



## The entry "iWay – Walk it, Bike it, Love it" from Hastings District Council won the *Better Local Services for Less* category.

Hastings Deputy Mayor and cycling advocate Cynthia Bowers says: "This award is recognition of the hard work, drive and energy which has allowed the project to achieve an enormous amount in a short space of time. Council recognised that the development of sustainable transport options was the way of the future, and the iWay project has delivered that vision."

In 2010, Hastings District Council submitted a proposal to the New Zealand Transport Agency to become New Zealand's first walking and cycling "Model Community". The initiative is designed to demonstrate that carefully planned, sustained investment in walking and cycling can have a positive impact on a community.

Hastings won the competition and was



awarded \$4 million which was supported by a \$2.4 million local contribution for a two-year programme of developing walking and cycling routes. The rationale for the project was to make walking and cycling irresistible and to generate real community spirit.

By mid 2012, the end of the two-year period, the planned network was completed. More than 108km of new

walking and cycling pathways have been constructed, including four key "arterial" routes that link the communities of Flaxmere, Hastings, Havelock and Clive.

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KAWERAU DISTRICT COUNCIL



# Industrial Symbiosis Kawerau

**The entry “Industrial Symbiosis Kawerau” (ISK) entered by Kawerau District Council received a commendation in the category *Joined Up Local Government*.**

ISK is an initiative to stimulate growth, create jobs and promote Kawerau as a business destination. It aims to increase collaboration between enterprises within close proximity to share resources such as energy, water, by-products, services, materials, knowledge, intellectual property, social capital and networks.

The initiative driven by Kawerau District Council and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise was based on developing sustainable interconnected businesses with open communication. The result is regular contact between 150 organisations and financial backing from the Ministry of Social Development.



The next step will be to utilise the “Embrace Change” brand by proactively promoting Kawerau to businesses looking to adopt clean technologies and progressive practices.

This will be followed by collaborating with training establishments to ensure the future of Kawerau’s labour pool, consolidating the membership of “Industrial Symbiosis Kawerau” and establishing sustainable revenue streams.

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OPOTIKI/GISBORNE DISTRICT COUNCILS



# Motu Trails Cycleway

**The “Motu Trails Cycleway” entry from Opotiki District Council received a commendation in the *Joined Up Local Government* category. The judges saw the project as an example of genuine local leadership with the council being prepared to take risks to “seize the opportunity” and bring together a winning coalition of partners to make it happen.**

“Motu Trails Cycleway” is the development of a 120 kilometre recreational cycle trail, an economic development initiative targeting the tourism sector. Construction of the trail was supported by the Ministry of Economic Development and is part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail Project – Nga Haerenga.

The project aims to generate short and

long-term economic benefits; employment; a world class cycling experience; to maximise health and environmental benefits; and engage local communities. The benefits of the cycleway are that for both Gisborne and Opotiki Councils, the project brought opportunities to “deliver something” to some of the most remote and isolated communities in the North Island.

More recently, on the back of the success of the Motu Trails, Gisborne has won approval for an NZCT expansion project – a cycling network that would link Motu Trails from Matawai to Gisborne.

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AUCKLAND COUNCIL

# Operational excellence



**The entry “Operational Excellence” entered by Auckland Council received a commendation in the category *Better Local Services for Less*.**

The Senior Leadership Team from the Auckland Council instituted a long-term programme of operational excellence across the business to combat the increase of rates. The rationale for this was that Auckland Council inherited from the previous councils an average 6 percent increase in rates for the 2011/12 year. The cost of transition coupled with updated information had indicated this would rise to 9.3 percent if left unchecked.

The result of the programme for the financial year 2011/12 was a savings within operations of \$81 million which enabled the council to deliver a much lower than

expected 3.94 percent increase in rates to Aucklanders.

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NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL

# Energy Management Programme



## **The entry “Energy Management Programme” entered by New Plymouth District Council received a commendation in the category *Better Local Services for Less.***

New Plymouth District Council is a large energy consumer with current expenditure (2011/12) exceeding \$3.9 million across electricity, gas, petrol and diesel.

In 2007 the council committed to responsible, efficient and cost-effective energy management throughout the council’s operations by taking up the opportunity of a part funded EECA Energy Manager pilot scheme.

This has resulted in energy savings of more than \$600,000 through a steady decline in energy and fuel consumption and has changed how the council conducts its business in terms of ongoing energy use.

The benefits of the programme have extended to the community and ratepayers. Simply reducing energy consumption, thus saving money, will assist in the stabilisation of rate increases.

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SOLGM CONFERENCE 2012

# Conference 'relevant, useful'



**The SOLGM Annual Conference in Auckland provided the venue for SOLGM members, local government colleagues and peers from service providers to discuss issues and share ideas.**

A total of 283 people attended the conference, and of that, 30 local government chief executives were present and 59 of the 78 local councils were represented. The majority of the conference attendees who answered the post-conference survey were either extremely satisfied or moderately satisfied. Overall, delegates found the conference programme content to be relevant and useful. We also noted a few suggestions for improvements ie, more workshop-types sessions where theories and ideas presented are discussed on how to apply these practically.

And as always, the social functions,

particularly the Cruise Around the Pacific conference dinner, was again a highlight for delegates. Visit SOLGM NZ on Facebook and have take a look at the photos taken at the dinner and the conference.

The following pages in this section of *Pulse* give you a brief summary of the keynote presentations delivered at the conference.

If you attended the event, this is a great refresher to remind you of the things you picked up and if you were not there, you may get some ideas from these stories. We have also updated our website to showcase a library of some of these presentations. Click [here](#) to access the conference presentations on our website.

## 2013 EVENT

We are working on refreshing the event for next year. We understand that councils are facing challenging times when it comes to attending conferences and training events. So we have to be smarter in how we develop the SOLGM event that will be most useful and relevant, and more importantly cost-effective.

But in the meantime, **SAVE THE DATE!**

**SOLGM 2013 Event, 3-5 November 2013**

Museum of New Zealand  
– Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington

Click [<here>](#) to download the calendar appointment to your outlook



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SOLGM CONFERENCE 2012

# Mirror drives Ngahi

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NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

**As a man with extensive moko (facial tattoo), it's perhaps not surprising that Ngahihi o te ra Bidois spends time in front of the mirror. However, it's not vanity that drives him; rather the questions he asks of himself.**

As the first keynote speaker, he set the tone of the SOLGM conference on the Sunday evening by suggesting members could survive anything that came their way if they looked in the mirror.

"If you look in the mirror and ask honest questions of that person, you will get honest answers. It's one of the most effective leadership tools I know of.

"Imagine if you took 10 minutes at the start of every day to just sit and think about your role as a leader and the difference that could make. If you took 10 minutes to look

in the mirror and ask what will you will be today, how can I fix it so that during the day you go away and make those changes before returning to your mirror the very next day."

Injecting plenty of Maori proverbs into his talk, Ngahihi challenged the audience to create desirable communities by having the courage to do more with less. He also challenged the norm by saying: "If it isn't broken, fix it".

When he first heard it, he wondered why you should try to fix something that was working well. A friend asked him to imagine what might have happened if the people who had created cell phones



Ngahihi o te ra Bidois: "If you look in the mirror and ask honest questions of that person, you will get honest answers."

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS

# Mirror drives Ngahi

had said they had a perfect product and needed to do no more.

"This device is no longer just a phone," Ngahi said. "It's now a mini computer, a video recorder, a GPS....

"When it comes to doing more with less, all you need to do is fix it."

The people who will help you fix things are what Ngahi calls eagles. Eagles build their nests on high cliff faces. The young chicks get comfortable in their nests until the eagles push them off the cliff. What is immediately scary as the chick plummets becomes elation as they realise they can fly.

"Eagles were never born to sit around their nests or walk around on cliffs," he says.

"Eagles were born to soar, and so are you."

Eagles are the mentors in our lives and asked delegates to find our own eagles.

He said he had lived through time in prison,



but not the kind of prison that has iron bars. It was a prison of the mind. He had a belief, reinforced by others, that he would never amount to anything. The belief threw up bars that stopped him achieving anything meaningful.

Then he went to live with his grandmother for two years. She taught him a powerful proverb: "The thought creates the person".

She said: "It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks of you, what matters is what you

"Eagles were never born to sit around their nests or walk around on cliffs. Eagles were born to soar, and so are you."

think about you."

"She brought down all those bars one by one."

Kung Fu actor Bruce Lee also said: "As we think, so shall we become".

Ngahi talked about communication and power distance index and told a story of a black box recording of a conversation between a pilot and a co-pilot seconds before a crash.

The culture in that organisation at that time is that no one questions the pilot. So when the co-pilot thought they were flying into

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a mountain by looking at his instruments, instead of being direct just made a comment about limited visibility. The pilot, however, asserted his authority by saying: "That's OK, I've flown up here many times before."

Again, the co-pilot just asked another question, "Don't you think we should check our equipment just to see that we're in the right designated area?"

"No, we're fine."

Then the black box records the bang as the plane hits the mountain.

"How did the organisation solve the problem? They swapped seats of the pilot and co-pilot and trained the latter to be more assertive.

"The next time you hear an announcement from the first officer that he's flying the plane, it's actually good because it means sitting next to him is the experienced

captain. Do you think he's going let this guy fly into a mountain?

"Ask yourself, how high is the power distance index with the people you work with?" Ngahi asked. "Does anyone have the right to tell you that you're about to fly into a mountain? Does anyone in your organisation have the right to challenge decisions respectfully?"



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SOLGM CONFERENCE 2012

# Building capacity

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**Doing more with less is not just about cutting costs, but rather building capacity in innovative ways, Philip Monaghan told the SOLGM conference.**

The English author, economist and change manager said spending cuts had put enormous pressure on councils but there was still skepticism about the need to take action in some areas.

"Climate change, for example, is a problem that seems to be far from the future, it's painful and it's a bad news story," he said. "Is it something you want to deal with now, in the bad times, when, to be frank, it's not something you want to deal with in the good times?"

He told his audience their role was to deliver quality public services. What he saw around the world with spending cuts

was that people were confused and fearful of the future and their jobs, and reacted accordingly.

"They see being able to save the most money as their main goal. That's not the goal. Your goal is to deliver quality public services in an age of austerity."

He saw similarities with New Zealand's Better Local Government reforms and Britain's Localism reforms. There was little argument about the need to tighten belts, but the debate was about which areas to trim.

In the UK, there's a perception that local government is inefficient, not innovative compared to other sectors, and that the rules of the game need to be changed. Localism in the UK was about smaller government and bigger society.

"It's not just about saving money, it's also about rethinking roles and responsibilities.





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# Building capacity



Some local authorities have actually welcomed it and think it's an opportunity to do things differently."

One council, for example, was keen to embrace the reforms, looking at being a "commissioner" of services rather than a deliverer. It would cut staff from about 27,000 to just a few hundred. Those staff would be responsible for contracts and ensuring those contracts were delivered. The plan would cut 30 percent from a multi-million dollar budget.

"There was a slight problem. Most of the people who worked for the council actually lived in the council area. Sacking voters tends not be a good idea."

There were more fundamental problems. One of the local libraries started using volunteers instead of paid staff. The result was that it was often closed because the volunteers were not available.

"It's difficult to punish, sanction or sack a volunteer."

The aggressive changes made the communities less resilient. Resiliency, he said, was the ability to absorb shocks. It was not just about being able to resist shocks, but to be adaptable to change and having the capacity to self-organise and learn.

"In a time of spending cuts, don't lose the capacity to learn," he said. "Coming to conference is one way to learn, but institutionally, how do your staff, councillors and districts capture and nurture learning?"

Cutting the capacity of people to develop and learn was dangerous, he said.

For the council that cut staff, it was not just about saving money, but also changing the rules of the game. It failed to involve people in the decision-making about priorities.

The footprint of local authorities is huge,

"In a time of spending cuts, don't lose the capacity to learn. Coming to conference is one way to learn, but institutionally, how do your staff, councillors and districts capture and nurture learning?"

in terms of property, contracts, spending power, and facilitating the use of resources.

In the UK, Philip has been interested to see where councils invest their pension funds, which has been largely with the banks that have been part of the global financial crisis. The crisis has left many citizens in poverty and councils are having to pick up the pieces.

Councils can legally invest those funds in regeneration projects, but they see it as too



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# Building capacity

difficult, or the amount of money in each council is not very big. So some councils are looking at pooling their resources, doing feasibility studies, looking at the rate of return and investing in sustainability projects.

It's a great example of doing more with less because it costs the councils nothing – it's just redirecting existing investment.

"Where would you rather invest your money? Would you rather it go to the big banks, or low carbon regeneration?"

Philip challenged everyone to look at whether they really were doing more with less, which was not just about saving money but building capacity. He said that despite the perception, local government often led the way with innovation, far exceeding what the public sector was doing.

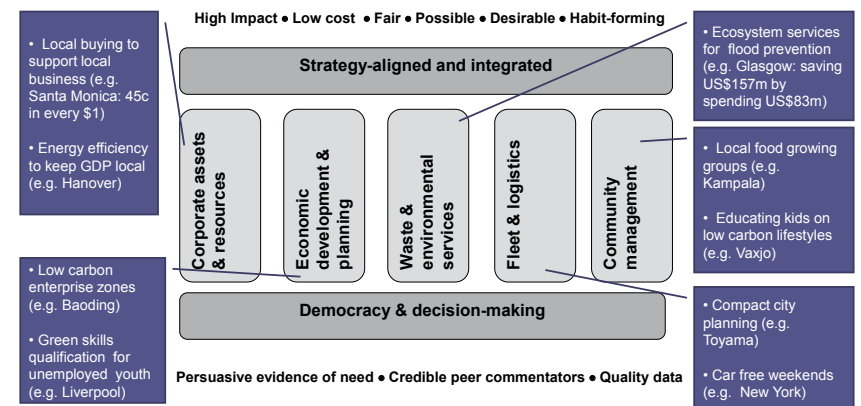
In Tokyo, for example, the city council decided to impose its own bylaws around

climate change, because central government was dragging its feet. The council took the view that it wanted the city to be a great place in which to live and took action to make that happen.

In closing, he reiterated that doing more with less should not ignore the importance of learning, that front-line capacity should not be lost, and that the situation provided opportunities to do things differently to create new jobs and keep things local.

"There's a long track record of councils

## Upside of down: austerity as an opportunity to change



[Sources: Sustainability in Austerity, 2010; The Transition to a Green Economy: The Vital Role of the Ensuring Council, 2012]

being innovative, usually in times of crisis, not that we welcome crisis, but that we can do great work during this time."

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# Habitat tipping point

**The way we make human habitats has reached a tipping point, warned Phillip Daffara, an Australian architect and scholar of urban futures.**

"Human habitats are complex ecological systems," he told the SOLGM conference.

"We are an urban world. Human civilisation is heading towards greater complexity, it requires more energy to maintain and because of that it is more vulnerable."

Resilience – a word Phillip noted was absent from Local Government Minister David Carter's speech the day before – shifts the policy from those who aspire to control change in systems assumed to be stable, to managing the capacity of social and ecological systems that adapt to and shape change.

He said we sometimes forget the fact that towns and cities were made by people for



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# Habitat tipping point

people. However, our ways of living are threatening the life of the planet.

"That outcome can surely not be part of creating desirable communities," he said.

He wondered what archeologists would find in New Zealand in 1000 years time. What trash would they find, would they find a pristine environment, and what strange artifacts? What strange things have we built today that will become ruins for future generations?

"It's so easy for us as human beings to apply templates from the past and put them on to the future, rather than taking the opportunity to see how we can rethink those templates to create the future we want."

He talked about the world's megatrends, which include our growing ecological footprint, greater energy demand, increased pandemic risk, increased climate change, an

"It's so easy for us as human being to apply templates from the past and put them on to the future, rather than taking the opportunity to see how we can rethink those templates to create the future we want."

increasingly urban world, clashes of cultures and an ageing population.

Phillip said communities were approaching tipping points. For example, an ecological tipping point was when one ecosystem changes to another stable ecosystem that is less productive. When the tipping point is passed, a transition to a new state occurs and the tipping event may be irreversible.

"The reason we need to talk about the future of human habitation and resilience is pretty clear in my mind. We live in an era of increasing global urbanisation and our ways of living are threatening the biosphere, life on our planet and in turn, civilisation."

Phillip defined the problem:

"We have human habitation within carbon-hungry cities, which is driving global climate change, with the impact of sea level rise tipping points that affect our coastal communities, and linear metabolism of production and consumption – so it goes in one pipeline and out the other, and we're not connecting the pipeline. Because of that we've got increased emissions, organic and inorganic waste. The next layer of complication is that our social and ecological systems because of the first two, are approaching collapse.

"Towns and cities need to be transformed

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# Habitat tipping point

towards greater resilience. The means to do that is towards zero waste and a low carbon world.

"Everything we do needs to add back to the biosphere in some way."

He suggested people could not look to the Government for change, but that it was up to local authorities, engaged with their local communities.

"Local governments are the agents of ecological, sociological and techno-economic transformation."

Phillip presented several eco-design principles:

Solutions grow from place – if you are sensitive to the qualities of place you can inhabit without destroying.

Design with nature, allowing the healthy co-existence of all species by working with living processes.

"Towns and cities need to be transformed towards greater resilience. The means to do that is towards zero waste and a low carbon world.

Everything we do needs to add back to the biosphere in some way."

Ecological accounting and forms design, ie understanding the environmental impacts of design possibilities.

Rely on natural energy flows, so you use responsibly solar, wind and water resources.

Make nature visible, which helps our health and well-being and reminds us of our place in nature so we're not disconnected from it.

## EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- Transition Towns network
- Community visioning
- Relocalize
- Resilient Cities ICLEI
- Living Building Challenge
- Project for Public Places

Understand the limitations of design, know that human design does not solve all problems.

Creating desirable communities, he said, required a holistic policy framework for the development of our human settlements. The attributes for holistic livability include:

On a material level, our habitat is the locus

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# Habitat tipping point

of personal place and shelter, production and exchange, communal places and defensible space.

At the biological and ecological level, our habitat is the place of personal sensitive experience, healthy habitats, holistic aesthetics and art, and deep ecology.

At the phycho-social level, our habitat is the place of personal dreams and expectations, personal action, diverse cultures, heritages and value systems, and collective knowledge.

At the spiritual level it is the place of our spiritual beliefs, self-actualisation, safe and collective action and collective beliefs.

Phillip said the big questions for all communities were: where do we want to be in the future, and what are the shared visions for our place?

"Local governance needs to build a foresight capacity with individuals and

stakeholders ... which is critical to resolve the urban dilemmas created through the megatrends.

"It's a means of getting ahead of the change.

"Our 21st century agenda is to redesign human habitation as resilient communities in symbiotic relationship with nature. Communities are social ecological systems. We can't deal with them separately any more."

In conclusion, he said decision-makers needed to broaden their toolbox – not their budgets – to cope with the world's complexity and uncertainty.

"Local governance needs to build a foresight capacity with individuals and stakeholders ... which is critical to resolve the urban dilemmas created through the megatrends. It's a means of getting ahead of the change."



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# Geoff Cooper



In a session entitled *Entrepreneurship, innovation and the public sector: A cross sectoral perspective*, three young innovators showed the SOLGM conference that the complex challenges of tomorrow's world are likely to be in good hands.

**Geoff Cooper, Chief Economist  
Auckland Council**

Geoff quoted Friedrich Hayek to explain an economist's view of innovation. Hayek, a mid-20th century economist, asserted that firms innovate, but the public sector doesn't. Its primary function then, is to support firms to go about their innovation.

"Economists generally say that the public sector doesn't really innovate – that rather the public sector just creates the right environment for business to innovate," Geoff said. "What the public sector should do is look at market failures. Where is the market not working and what can you do

to make it work better?"

Geoff advocated market-based solutions to social problems, an area in which he has spent considerable time. He has worked extensively on developing microcredit and insurance products for the poor – both market-based solutions to poverty which provide sustainable solutions and cost-effective solutions.

Microfinance exists because the conventional financial sector is unable to effectively reach across to people without secure income streams and collateral.

"With microfinance, the perception of risk for lending to the poor suddenly went from being sky high to being extremely low – perhaps even less risky than lending to wealthier people," Geoff said. "An industry was born overnight that was able to service the poor with financial services."

Geoff also mentioned various other market-

based solutions that could be applied to social problems such as traffic congestion or urban sprawl.

"Despite claims that we have reached the heights of innovation, there is surely plenty of room for more – and the public sector has an important role to play."



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# Holly Ransom



## Holly Ransom, Australian social entrepreneur

Holly talked about how to use innovation to create more with less – using outputs to add value or to create new value.

To truly innovate, people must stop being afraid to fail, she said. Failure and mistakes are an inherent part of innovation. No one gets it 100 percent right the first time.

“We need to get comfortable with that which makes us inherently uncomfortable if we are going to innovate. We need to understand that we have to take risk for these new potentials and unrealised opportunities to become reality.”

Failure allows innovators to validate their assumptions. Feedback from consumers will help form marketing decisions, rather than the old school of thought that created a product and then looked for a market.

“The 21st century asks what does the market want, let me prototype something and put it

out to the market and have the market tell me what it thinks.”

The engagement with stakeholders allows us to have greater interaction with the end consumers and encourages innovation.

Holly quoted Facebook, which in the early days said “Move fast and break things”. As its founder, Mark Zuckerberg, said, making mistakes is not only OK, it’s absolutely essential to refining your hypothesis.

Systems and organisations, however, sometimes stifle innovation because they rely on “track records” or success. Grants, for example, are often rejected because submissions that are truly innovative have no way of showing that they will succeed.

Venture capitalists, by contrast, look at the idea and judge it on its merits. History counts for nothing. Great ideas often come from 9, 10 or 11-year-olds.

Systems need to encourage creativity, Holly

said. An example is the Google offices, where interaction between employees is fostered to create new thinking for 21st century problems. Google also allows time for staff to work on any project or idea they want – an innovation that created, Gmail for example.



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# Vanisa Dhiru



## Vanisa Dhiru, Chief Executive, Volunteering NZ

Entrepreneurial thinking in organisations is vital for creating ideas that will help to sustain communities, Vanisa said.

"We need different people surrounding us, a diversity of cultures, people and backgrounds to enable the entrepreneur within us to come out."

Quoting [actioncoach.com](http://actioncoach.com), Vanisa said entrepreneurs are most likely to be confident, good communicators, love learning, team players, understand they can't do everything themselves, system freaks, dedicated and grateful, optimistic, gregarious, leaders by example, not afraid of risk-taking and risky themselves. How do we find these people for our organisations?

"They're just normal people, sitting around in your communities and just need to be supported and listened to," Vanisa said.

One example of community innovation comes from the south-east side of Seattle. Its



historic character led to revitalisation in the 1990s, but one small, rundown area proved resistant to change and deterred investment.

At a public meeting, someone suggested that if the community couldn't attract real businesses, they could at least pretend.

So they did. Working with artists from the Southeast Seattle Arts Council they painted the communities' dreams on the plywood covering the windows. Residents said they would like to have an ice-cream parlour, toy store, dance studio, bookshop and hat shop.

The murals looked so realistic that passing motorists sometimes stopped to shop. A developer and several business owners got interested and within a year, every mural had to be removed because real businesses wanted to move there.

The lesson is that imagination and vision are important and should not be laughed at.

"Children and families have great ideas, but there needs to be the space to create and embrace those ideas. And someone will eventually listen."

Vanisa said that many great ideas for organisations in the not-for-profit space came from volunteers.

"Innovative people are sitting in your workplaces and within your communities. They will be the people that do the odd jobs, keep quiet and listen."

Click [here](#) to view Geoff, Holly and Vanisa's presentations online. Note this is best viewed on Internet Explorer 7 and above.



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# Perception is reality



**It's always a challenge for the speaker on the "night after" the conference dinner, but Hannah Samuel introduced plenty of activity into her presentation to warm up her audience.**

The livewire author and public speaker on business reputation, trust and integrity had participants animated within minutes of her taking the stage, asking them to tell someone next to them the first thing that came into their head when she said "McDonald's", "Telecom" and "Madonna". The answers were to be quick-fire, one or two words and uncensored.

The responses were predictably varied for each name, and often unflattering, but served to show that people's perceptions of brands – whether companies or people – were not necessarily what the subjects might like.

"They probably wouldn't agree with how you described them, but here's the thing – who is right, us or them," she asked. "We are right, because we're the customer and it's our perception, and perception is reality," Hannah said.

"No matter how much they brand and position themselves and put out media statements, how we perceive someone in a word or two, uncensored and un-politically correct, is their reputation."

The challenge for businesses and organisations is that while they might try to influence what people think about them or what they're saying, they can't control it. However, it's not to say that working on influencing people is unimportant.

"It's up to everyone in this room to actively influence reputation so we're stepping out with our best foot forward as much as we possibly can."

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# Perception is reality

Hannah outlined three key ways that reputation is formed:

**What an organisation says about itself.** It's in the vision and mission statements and on the website. It's everything they control. The problem is that three out of four people don't believe the claims and promises organisations make. In the words of Elvis, they have suspicious minds.

**What others say about us.** This carries much more weight than what we say about ourselves. The research shows that about 90 percent of us believe what we hear from people who look and sound like us, rather than what organisations say about themselves.

**What someone experiences for himself when they interact with you.** It's the most important factor in forming reputation. Every person in an organisation carries its reputation in their hands, so the experience

people have in their interactions is critical.

The problem is often that only about 5 percent of customers point out the faults they perceive in the organisation. Just like the diners who fail to complain about the food or service, they're unlikely to tell the management, but they will tell other people, who will tell other people and so on. Reputations have been ruined because of the bad experiences of customers who never complain directly.

"It's absolutely the same thing with local government," Hannah said. "The initiatives you develop, all the things you do, is under the microscope all the time."

The problem now is that people are also complaining on-line, which has a huge impact on reputation. She suggested we engage more with customers on-line.

"The fact that you're not part of the conversation doesn't mean the conversation



Reputations have been ruined because of the bad experiences of customers who never complain directly. "It's absolutely the same thing with local government. The initiatives you develop, all the things you do, is under the microscope all the time."



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# Perception is reality

isn't happening," she said. "The question is not whether you should be involved in social media, but how to get involved and that's entirely up to you. Local bodies especially, need to be part of the conversation.

What is critical, she said, is that social media is not a media strategy delegated to a communications person.

"Social media is the responsibility of absolutely everybody in your organisation, especially the chief executive and senior managers. That's hugely important. It's about fronting up and accepting responsibility, and it's about open and honest communication.

"Social media is not going back in the bottle. The genie is out and you need to be there listening to what's going on and engaging in a personable way."

Hannah outlined how her audience could use three steps engage with customers

to promote faith and confidence in local government, therefore helping to build strong, creative communities.

The first step is that they should engage on an emotional level, because people get emotional about issues, especially at a community level. "Articulate your values really clearly and make it an emotional thing, rather than a logical thing."

The second step is to ensure the experience of customers is consistently good. The experience needs to be the best possible all the time, because perceptions are formed only on the last positive interaction they have.

The third is esteem. Treat people with respect and in a way they would want to be treated.

At the backbone of all is ethics, which everyone expects and wants to see in their local authority organisation.

"Are the people in your organisation on the same page as you? Do they have the same values? Can they tell you what the organisation's vision and mission are without having to pull out a folder?"

"If they're not on the same page as you, you've got a huge potential problem. Any of these things can either make or break your reputation, and can build trust or break trust."

On a final note, Hannah said: "Reputation rules. It's absolutely important in terms of how we engage with people, how we connect, how we can bring them on board so they speak well of us and help us build creative communities."

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# Keeping pace with change

**By 2020, the trends indicate every person in Africa will have a mobile phone.**

"Who would have thought that was possible 10 or 20 years ago," media presenter and business commentator Andrew Patterson asked his conference audience.

The rapidly changing world and Gen Y's influence in that world was the theme of his talk. As a media commentator, he had to regularly ask himself whether his thinking was keeping pace with the changes around him.

"Every day I get to discover content that is reflective of all the transformative changes happening around us, even right here in New Zealand," he said. "Like the decile 1 primary school that has every student above eight years of age working on laptops that parents are paying off at the rate of \$3.50 a week."

The system is run on Google Apps and on a wireless network covering nine other schools in the area, paid for by a trust established by several benefactors.

In another low-income area of South Auckland, an intermediate school has set up its own market garden and hot-house to grow vegetables for its cooking classes, plus a recycling programme "that would put most businesses and perhaps even some councils to shame".

Andrew believed these kinds of innovations could be better supported by organisations such as local councils to reinvigorate communities in the 21st century.

He asked what councils and communities could do to work to full capacity. He had three key questions:

What could local government look like in 10 years and where could it be involved where it isn't now?



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# Keeping pace with change

What forces will shape communities in the future?

How will Gen Y and their thinking, their influence and their perception of the world change our thinking, especially when they will become senior management themselves?

The Gen Ys were born in the mid-80s and are now entering the workforce in big numbers. They're tech-savvy, wired 24/7 and have grown up with the internet. They're family-centric and brought up by parents who don't want to make the mistakes of the previous generation.

Gen Y is confident, ambitious and achievement-oriented. They have high expectations of their employers. They seek out new challenges and they're not afraid to question authority.

They see work as meaningful as long as they're involved and it's for an organisation

they believe reflects their values. They're team-oriented and like to take the initiative.

Their needs, desires and attitudes can't be ignored, Andrew said. Some are seen as selfish and arrogant, but it's generally

a view from people who try to impose authority on them.

"I believe local government organisations are increasingly going to be key to this reinvention process and the reinvigoration of communities by allowing innovation



## SIX YOUNG LEADERS WHO ARE ALREADY MAKING A DIFFERENCE



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# Keeping pace with change

to flow from the bottom up," Andrew said. "It's innovation in its widest sense: innovative thinking, innovative processes, innovative technologies and innovative ways of engaging with people."

Local government must be prepared to help shift the paradigm in the 21st century.

"If you are, I want you to feel you can be part of a renaissance for local government where technology, innovation and the deep wells of social capital that exist in our communities can be effectively harnessed and come together to forge a New Zealand that is much more in keeping with our societal values."

The baby boomers who have ruled for the past 2-30 years are nearing retirement but Andrew suggests are not yet ready to hand over the keys to the Gen Ys waiting in the wings. However, some of the Gen Y thinking needs to be integrated into the comfortably established paradigms.

He used several examples of young people who were doing remarkable things in their community, including Sam Johnson, who organised student volunteers after the second Canterbury earthquake.

"In less than three weeks, working from his bedroom, he was able to use social networks to build a team of volunteers faster and more effectively than any government organisation, business or not-for-profit charity has done in this country's history. You can imagine if the Government set up a working group to study the idea. I suspect Christchurch would have been almost completely rebuilt before the group had even been formed. Think of the health and safety requirements, the form filling, the bureaucracy to administer the programme, the policy development, the computer systems, the IT structure, the equipment."

So how do you engage young people in local government?

"Gen Y need to believe in the fundamental value of the organisation that is seeking to engage with them before they buy in. It's not automatic. If they don't believe in your values, they don't buy into the process."

Allow them to drive innovation their way, he said.

He said the sports drink company Gatorade set up a team of 14 whose job was to monitor and respond to Gatorade-related issues on social media. The near-instant responses set a standard that is a challenge for organisations such as councils that have largely not embraced social media.

Andrew said that young people were developing some fantastic projects, so it was worth considering funding their projects, rather than doing the projects at the local government level.

"I guarantee they'll exceed your expectations every time and you'll be amazed at what they discover."

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# The Lady Gaga effect

**The lessons of Lady Gaga might seem a little incongruous for a SOLGM conference, but digital entrepreneur Claudia Batten showed they were as relevant to her Auckland audience as they were to the singer's fans.**

Lady Gaga has used social media unlike anyone else to build a huge community of digital fans, to build her brand and her business, Claudia said. Some of the techniques were relevant to local government.

"In marketing, we used to get sold to," she said. "Marketers used to come up with clever stories, reasons to believe and ways to communicate their competitive differentiation. They entertained us and we were very much a captive audience.

"What's happening with peer-to-peer

networking is that it's much more about having a two-way dialogue, a conversation. It's changing the way we communicate."

Claudia talked about fellow Kiwi Sarah Robb O'Hagan, who as chief marketing officer of sports drink company Gatorade had helped to generate US\$90 million in annual revenue. Sarah had established a "mission control" group of staff who were listening and watching everything online related to Gatorade, and interacting with participants.

The company gains valuable insights into what people feel about their brand and how they're interacting with it. It leads to strategies such as whether more product should be at certain events.

Starbucks not only engage in conversation about their brand, but also in 2011 started a sophisticated online suggestion box. They asked, among other things, what consumers liked and didn't like, to build their brand.





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# The Lady Gaga effect

About 100,000 ideas poured in. Starbucks customers became heavily involved and wanted to be part of the marketing conversation.

"Smart brands in the US and I think also in New Zealand are starting to move to this more discussion-based approach to marketing," Claudia said. "It's even evolving beyond marketing to also be about communication."

Claudia co-founded advertising agency Victors & Spoils in the US in 2009. It introduced the concept of crowdsourcing. Instead of going out to find the best creative people, the agency said "come one, come all" to seek the best marketing solutions. The people with the best ideas were paid for their ideas.

One of the company's clients, Harley Davidson, was excited to engage its fans in a conversation about its brand.

"We built some technology that allowed

"Smart brands in the US and New Zealand are starting to move to this more discussion-based approach to marketing. It's even evolving beyond marketing to also be about communication."

Facebook fans of Harley Davidson to crowdsource and be part of the marketing conversation and to deliver responses to various creative briefs that we had. We hosted multiple competitions within Facebook and the fans really responded.

"It was connecting with consumers on a deeper level and investing them in the future of the brand."

Returning to Lady Gaga, Claudia said the



singer was arguably the most digitally connected person in the world. From a virtual unknown in 2007, she has accumulated 53 million fans on Facebook and nearly 29 million Twitter followers. Interestingly, 2007 was the year the i-Phone was released, Facebook was only three years old and Twitter a year old.

"It's not just that she's usually social media to market, but also she's finding a broader

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# The Lady Gaga effect

"Digital for me is not all about consumption. It's about really belonging, it's about adopting into community, it's about sharing or having a point of view. It's important when you're thinking about how to create community around what you're doing."

use for it. She's going out and lending her name as a creative director to the likes of Polaroid and Virgin America. She's now number 14 on the Forbes most powerful women list, headed by people such as [German Chancellor] Angela Merkel and [US Secretary of State] Hillary Clinton."

The community of fans and followers Lady

Gaga has created is a valuable resource. It's so compelling that she lends her network of digital connections to Google, one of the world's biggest players in social media.

"Digital for me is not all about consumption. It's about really belonging, it's about adopting into community, it's about sharing or having a point of view. It's important when you're thinking about how to create community around what you're doing."

Claudia said that in the digital media space, you need to be authentic, responsible and honest, collaborative like Harley Davidson and Starbucks, and engaged with stakeholder like Gatorade.

Understanding why your organisation does things, its purpose, is critically important. It helps your organisation to be authentic and transparent.

Organisations will always get negative

comments about what they do, "but if you hold true to what you're saying, people will come through from your community and defend you without you having to say anything".

Claudia said the best advice she could give was that working with social media was an art and not a science. There is no guide to social media because it's evolving all the time. Everyone is trying to figure it out.

"If you're building this positive following in your community, they will allow that journey to be had with them. They're not going to rebel against you for having a bad ad, and a bad conversation is all over in a day."

Her final thought was that anyone who really wanted to make a mess of social media could do absolutely nothing, or not pay attention to what was happening.

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# Building social capital

Beginning his talk on managing cultural diversity, Victoria University professor of psychology James Liu reminded conference participants that New Zealand now had one in four residents born overseas.

It also held a unique place in the world because it was symbolically and legally bi-cultural.

The self-described Chinese American New Zealander talked about individualistic independent (Western) cultures and interdependent cultures (more traditional cultures such as Maori and Asian).

Independent cultures focus more on self-esteem. They prioritise the individual as a citizen in the state.

Collective, interdependent cultures are more duty focused. They prioritise hierarchically ordered moral and ethical relations in a network that's fixed and stable. The relative success of Asian societies is that they've



been able to maintain these social relations despite the global changes and dislocations of social capital.

"If you want to understand why people do what they do within traditional Maori or Asian cultures, it's because there's a social norm that determines action."

James believes individualism reached its apex and began to decline after the attacks on the United States in 2001 and America's response to those attacks.

"This is a society where ties between individuals are loose and everybody is expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. You as local government providers have to look beyond that. You have to somehow create a connectivity."

In bi-cultural New Zealand, the challenge is to genuinely accommodate Maori needs and desires without creating what's seen as special treatment. Recognition of the Maori world view is beginning to happen with issues such as water management.

"It's about thinking of the river as a person – would you cut off your mother's finger? These are really interesting discourses in water management that could benefit us all, as opposed to the resource-based fighting over the fixed pie."

There were some positive signs for producing a strong bi-cultural and multi-cultural society in New Zealand.

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# Building social capital

For example, local data showed that all ethnic groups have strong patriotic attachments to New Zealand, especially Pasifika.

An international study asked people throughout the world whether they agreed with the statement: It's a good thing for any society to be made up of different races, religions and cultures.

New Zealand was at the top with 90 percent answering in the affirmative. Most European countries, however, had low scores, indicating much bigger problems of racism and religious intolerance.

"We have the basis for building strong social networks, but we need to truly understand difference. The difference can be quite fundamental, but we as human beings are capable of contending with that."

James explained social capital as the

**"You're always building social capital. As members of local government, that is your business."**

collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for one another.

"You're always building social capital. As members of local government, that is your business."

He got his audience to write down their social capital – the people who are really important to them, and whether there was cultural diversity within that map. This "bonding capital" is closely tied to who you are and where you come from. People growing up in Te Awamutu will have lots of social capital there.

He then asked participants to look at their

"bridging capital" – weaker ties with people less important in their lives. These people will have greater cultural diversity.

"What this shows you is that you can do more with less by building up your weak ties. Usually ethnic communities – especially Asian communities – are only called upon when they're needed for something. That's not going to get you action within Asian communities.

"You need to build those weak ties in times of calm, so when you need to call on them, they'll be ready for you. For Asians, those ties are obligations."

James had two simple rules for building social capital that come from religion. The core everyone must have is in every religion – described variously as compassion, love or benevolence.

The second is the rule that you do unto others as you would have them do unto you. As a Judeo-Christian concept it assumes you

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# Building social capital

know what people want. The more cautious Confucian rule is: Don't do unto others what you would not want have done unto you. It assumes you don't know someone, but you will give them respect until you do.

"It's nothing new, but it must be brought back into government again," James said. "You can't do more with less until you get into the heart of things."

Towards the end of his presentation, James introduced a young man who had been sitting quietly on stage with him. When Michael Robson (above right) finally did speak, he had the audience engrossed. The young, Asian-born unemployed man talked about his abusive childhood, his subsequent brushes with the law and his current study in social work.

Until the age of five Michael was raised in a Hong Kong orphanage. He was then brought to New Zealand by a couple who abused him physically and emotionally.



"I was often alone, and I had no sense of identity or culture," he said. "I moved on to a life of crime and got criminal convictions, and went through depression and attempted suicide."

Despite his past, Michael had taken an active role in promoting positive messages about Asians in New Zealand. He organised a huge number of Facebook followers when the National Front threatened to have an

anti-Asian protest in Auckland. He's also been a speaker at women's refuge and men against violence conferences.

His criminal past has made it difficult to find work. He concluded by appealing to the audience to find him a job.

James said Michael represented the people who the decision-makers needed to talk to when building social capital.

"If you're going to build an inclusive community, Michael is the man you should be talking to, not me. He represents a sector that you're not talking to enough."



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# Efficiency key: Minister

**In his speech to the SOLGM conference, Local Government Minister David Carter said he wanted councils to think about whether they were fulfilling community expectations, and talked about his hopes for sector reform.**

He said local authorities contributed significantly to the economy, making up 4 percent of GDP, spending \$7.5 billion each year of ratepayer money and managing \$115 billion worth of public assets.

"Councils must therefore play their part in creating an environment that is conducive to sustained economic growth, just as we in central government have focused on this over the past four years.

"In line with the fiscal restraints we have imposed on ourselves as central



government, every household and every business in New Zealand has had to do the same following the global financial crisis. Councils, too, must constrain spending,

keep costs down and run as efficiently and effectively as possible.

"A 7 percent average increase in rates each year over the past decade suggests there is some room for constraint. Whether you're a ratepayer or a taxpayer, New Zealanders need to know that their money is being spent wisely and on services that matter to them."

In a tight fiscal environment, the Minister expected councils to seriously consider whether their decisions matched their communities' expectations.

"Your job is to manage your communities' expectations," he said. "I acknowledge that role and I know it's not an easy one. It's demanding and challenging."

The Minister talked briefly about the role of the Local Government Efficiency Taskforce in the reforms. He reiterated that it was set up to advise the Minister how to streamline local government consultation, planning

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# Efficiency key: Minister

and financial reporting requirements and to find any duplication of these requirements in other legislation. The taskforce would also look at other opportunities to build efficient local government, including how to reduce the costs of procurement and how councils could share good practice and innovation.

"I am particularly interested in exploring improvements to the consultation requirements and we've asked that the majority of the taskforce final report focuses on this, in particular whether current requirements are fit for purpose and what changes can we make to ensure requirements stay useful, practical and effective in the long term."

The Minister talked about the cost of infrastructure investment, which he said since 2002 had resulted in council capital expenditure increasing 154 percent from \$1.6 billion to about \$4 billion a year.

"In line with reducing costs and operating as efficiently as possible, the Government believes local authorities must provide high quality infrastructure in the most cost-effective manner.

"I will shortly be appointing an expert advisory group that will report to me early next year on how we can better achieve that aim."

The group's terms of reference require it to focus on:

- What opportunities exist to reduce the cost of purchasing, providing and maintaining infrastructure while ensuring it still has sufficient quality to support a growing economy.
- What, if it is, restricts local government from exploring these opportunities?
- How such barriers can be avoided, reduced or overcome.
- How local government can improve its

consideration of the benefits and cost implications of decisions taken about infrastructure.

The group will consider the impact on the local government framework, the environment, business, health and the community.

"It is my hope that the group's recommendations will prioritise legislative change so that any such changes can be considered as part of the Local Government Bill proposed for 2013."

The Minister said the reform programme was a rare opportunity to deliver enduring legislation that reaped lasting rewards for all New Zealanders.

Speaking after the Minister, SOLGM president Ross McLeod said the "business of local government" had been doing the things that "create desirable communities" (the theme of the conference) – that help

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# Efficiency key: Minister

communities meet their needs and achieve their aspirations.

"That business clearly includes the vital infrastructure that enable growth and economic development, the ownership of which our communities hold dear. It clearly includes the planning and regulatory activity that allows places to be shaped and people to be protected, be it protecting and enhancing the art deco heritage of Napier or managing the growth needs of Auckland.

"But it also includes the facilities, events and partnership projects that allow communities and people to flourish and to get a hand up."

He said SOLGM had been listening to colleagues and political leaders. Themes that emerged included: As a sector, as councils, and as officials in the sector, we will embrace any opportunity to improve the ability of the sector to deliver as efficiently and effectively as possible for the



benefit of our communities.

As such, we are keen to engage and be listened to in the current legislative and review processes under way, on the basis that the skills and experience within the sector can provide valuable perspectives and knowledge.

Equally, it is clear that we will draw attention to and oppose any changes that

will impede the ability of communities to shape their futures, and impede the ability of councils to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs and aspirations of their communities.

Ross said that for too long the local government sector had struggled to have a strong, unified and coherent voice. In August, the presidents and chief executives of Local Government New Zealand, SOLGM and INGENIUM met together to discuss, among other things, how they could best harness the talent and resources in the sector to advocate to government and other parties on behalf of their communities.

"We decided that we could do better for the sector by working much more closely than we have . . . the coordinated approach to submissions and sector consultation on the Government's policy changes has been a start of that approach, but we want it to be an ongoing, default way of working."

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## SOLGM/ICMA MANAGER EXCHANGE

# 'A great experience'



By Gary Allis  
SOLGM Midlands Branch representative  
and Group Manager Engineering Services  
Western Bay of Plenty District Council

**The 2012 SOLGM/ICMA Manager Exchange was a great experience both professionally and personally. I encourage SOLGM members to apply for future exchanges.**

The exchange was between City Manager Eric King of Bend, Oregon, and myself. The exchange occurred in three main components.

The first component was Eric's visit to New Zealand, including attendance at the 2012 SOLGM conference in Auckland. It began with a visit to the pub to watch the All Blacks on television.

Eric commented favourably on the SOLGM conference and gained ideas for his state



Gary Allis at City Hall, Bend, Oregon.

conference, including using a comedian as MC. He found the conference size enabled relationships and networking, compared to

the ICMA conference of 3000 attendees. He found the hongi experience a challenge to personal space norms of an American.



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## SOLGM/ICMA MANAGER EXCHANGE

# 'A great experience'



The next week included attendance at the Waikato/Bay of Plenty ITM rugby match at Waikato Stadium, followed by meetings with the Western Bay Mayor, executives and shared services agents.

The visit to Rotorua included mountain biking with Michelle McFadyen, Chief Executive Officer of Long Reach Regional Council, Queensland, and Clare Crickett of Waikato Regional Council.

It was a pleasure to host Eric.

A couple of weeks later, my wife Pam and I flew to Oregon, rented a Ford Mustang convertible (on the bucket list) and spent a week with Eric and his wife Martha, Owen (6) and Meredith (4). It was a fantastic experience to be with them for a week and to share their home and family life.

There were four very full days of meetings with Bend City staff, Oregon Department of Transportation, the Parks and Recreation



Eric King of Bend, Oregon, and Longreach CEO Michelle McFadyen enjoy mountain biking in Rotorua.

chief executive and the developers of a major new urbanist subdivision.

Bend City Council has responsibility for police, fire, roading, water, wastewater, stormwater, building and district planning, but not parks, libraries and planning commission. Councillors are elected to a four-year term and paid US\$200 a month.

Council meetings are televised and speakers in the public forum are restricted to three minutes, monitored by the use of a traffic light system on the lectern.

Bend has a very smart e-building consent system. Plans are all submitted electronically (or scanned) and processed electronically in real time. Required changes are tracked



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## SOLGM/ICMA MANAGER EXCHANGE

# 'A great experience'



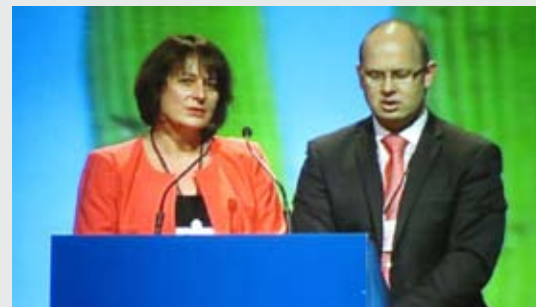
and responded to in real time by clients. Building Inspectors receive approved changes in real time to enable immediate on site decisions.

Bend has processed consents for Hawaii with this system. This type of system and its associated work flows would be of benefit in New Zealand.

The third component of the exchange was attendance at the ICMA conference in Phoenix, Arizona. ICMA had 2900 attendees. The highlight of the welcoming session was the international welcome given in Maori and English by SOLGM President Ross McLeod, followed by a waiata by Ross and SOLGM Chief Executive Karen Thomas. The international attendees appreciated the bicultural approach which was otherwise absent from the conference.

The key conference speakers were:

**Sir Ken Robinson:** "Leading a Culture of



SOLGM CEO Karen Thomas and President Ross McLeod deliver a waiata in front of 3000 people at the ICMA conference.

Change". My observation was that Sir Ken's English sense of humour had a delay before the Americans got it.

**Rev Ron David:** "Community, Complexity and Creativity: The Hidden Treasures of City Managers".

**Jim Collins:** "Good is the Enemy of Great". This was the light presentation of the conference. Jim provided a different perspective of the Scott and Amundsen race to the South Pole and related that race to

how great companies are great. His book, *Great by Choice* sets out his research and the Scott and Amundsen story.

The conference had multiple conference streams on a variety of topics. Overall the conference was a good experience. In terms of content and experience, the SOLGM conference is equal to, if not better than ICMA, but on a significantly smaller scale.

All sessions utilised an electronic feedback evaluation tool. At the end of the session questions went up on PowerPoint and there were five seconds to vote for each question. Instant evaluation – but the results weren't put on screen.

In conclusion I would like to thank SOLGM for the opportunity to participate in the exchange which was a fantastic experience, and to thank my exchange manager, Eric King, and his family for their hospitality and friendship.

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SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

Chris Ward



By Chris Ward  
Manager Strategic Response, Nelson City Council

**I recently was able to attend the SOLGM Annual Conference 2012 as a recipient of a Simpson Grierson Conference Attendance Award.**

Sunday began with Lawrence Yule effectively setting the scene for the three days, and Minister David Carter confirming the Government's intentions with the LGA reforms. Ngahihi o te Bidois spoke passionately on leadership, challenging us to look for new ways to fix things – even if they're not broken.

The highlights for me on Monday were the workshop sessions. Raymond Horan's update and analysis was clear and helpful, while both Philip Monaghan and Pat Dougherty gave some good examples of how local

government could do more with less.

There was a heavy focus on the opportunities that social media offered local government in Tuesday's discussions – opportunities to get messages out quicker, in a more targeted way and to engage with young people.

Ross McLeod's closing address picked out some of the key words for him over the conference – challenge, innovation, opportunities and values. Our focus needs to be on all four.

What have I gained from attending conference? I'm re-inspired to look for better ways of making a positive difference in my community. I'm more aware of the responsibility on me as an individual to deliver effectively and efficiently. And I have greater confidence in what we're doing as a management team at Nelson City Council to make our community a better place.



I would like to thank Simpson Grierson for their support. Their sponsorship has made it possible for me, as a relatively new manager, to learn from those in positions that I aspire to. The challenges by the various speakers to senior management in local government have also been laid down to me.

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SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

## Brenda Cacho-Bevin



By Brenda Cacho-Bevin  
Manager Client Services  
Hawke's Bay Regional Council

**I would like to thank Simpson Grierson for the grant to attend the recent SOLGM Annual Conference. It was a worthwhile experience for me and I greatly appreciate the Simpson Grierson Conference Attendance Award.**

My key expectations for the conference were to gain an insight into the local government leadership culture in New Zealand and to network with like-minded people. Both expectations were met.

The conference was a great learning experience and it confirmed my purpose of serving the community by doing my best in the council.

The opportunities for learning, networking

and reflection were available in abundance at the conference. My favourite sessions were about leadership, attitude and success stories of other councils. In this context, the conference was a very valuable and rewarding experience.

It was the title of the email from my manager with the subject "SOLGM Central Branch Emerging Leaders' Scholarship" that made me look closely at the conference. I was attracted by the theme: "Creating Desirable Communities – the business of local government" and so I decided to apply for the scholarship.

I have a background in the private corporate sector working in finance and accounting. I have been with Hawke's Bay Regional Council for one year and this is my first exposure of public service. I wish to explore the full range of learning opportunities so I can contribute to the work of the council in achieving its vision of



having a prosperous economy, and a clean and healthy regional environment.

My attendance would not have been possible if it had not been for the support of my manager, CEO, and the generosity of Simpson Grierson in providing me with the attendance award. I would encourage others to take advantage of these opportunities where and when they arise.

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## SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

# Chris Jensen



By Chris Jensen  
Manager, Regulatory & Planning  
Kawerau District Council

**Firstly, a huge thanks to Simpson Grierson for providing the means for me to attend the 2012 SOLGM Annual Conference.**

Working as I do in a small territorial authority facing many challenges to keep its community alive and kicking, the theme for this year's conference: "Helping local authorities create desirable communities" was particularly attractive and overall the conference did not disappoint with what it had to offer.

There was a big focus on the use of new communication technologies and social media. I came away with a clear message that the way we connect with people will be the key to understanding their wants and needs.

The whole dynamic of connection and engagement is in a period of massive change and we need to roll with that if we are to sustain those wants and needs.

As organisations, local authorities have phenomenal capability to influence the direction of their communities and we need to be constantly aware of social responsibility, environmentally sustainable business practices and reputation. All of these issues were covered off by a range of high calibre, sometimes inspirational presenters.

The highlight for me was the triple presentation by Geoff Cooper, Vanisa Dhiru and Holly Ransom. I was only disappointed they did not have a longer time with what they had to say. Andrew Patterson also delivered some inspiring thoughts around the capability of Gen Y.



As always, the social side of conference delivered great fun.

A lasting memory for me was the opportunity to receive a commendation (above) for the Kawerau Industrial Symbiosis Project in the SOLGM GHD Local Government Excellence Awards. It was great to stand up there and show that small can deliver great things. It was a proud moment for me and my community.

Congratulations to all involved with a great three days.



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SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

# Geoff Meadows



By Geoff Meadows  
Policy Manager  
Waimakariri District Council

**Although I have been a conference junkie over the past 30 years, this was my first SOLGM Annual Conference. For me, conferences are my chief source of ongoing professional development and the main way of keeping abreast of cutting-edge thinking and trends.**

The most significant take-home messages from the conference for me were as follows.

Mayor of Auckland Len Brown admitted that policy and strategy is now being done from the Mayor's office, and that 20 people support his role. LGNZ President Lawrence Yule asked the very relevant question: "How did we get to the eight-point plan with so little input from the sector?"

Phillip Daffara, an architect from the Sunshine Coast, presented a long talk on "Rethinking Human Habitation" and whetted my appetite by talking about global megatrends. He also issued a challenge to urban planners not to be addicted to dumb design, and to restore the ecological design paradigm. His advocacy of community visioning was good to hear, but talking about "panarchy" went beyond the realms of reality for most of his audience. (We're still defending democracy, and no taxation without representation.)

Phillip Monaghan (Infragilis) spoke on "Sustainability in Austerity" (which is code for doing more with less) and emphasised the resilience imperative. Local government is well placed to challenge the status quo. As an example, by local government mapping the supply chain, it was found that wind turbines made in China and assembled in Denmark were





## SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

## Geoff Meadows

best maintained (European benchmark) by UK local government. Local government has a history of innovation because central governments will necessarily not be able to respond to community sentiment as nimbly as local government.

Jonathon Salter from Simpson Grierson delivered a brilliant self-confessed rant on Better Local Government. He asked some pertinent questions about the eight-point plan:

- Why are the first two points addressing the same points as the 2010 amendments?
- Why are the first four points fixing the problem, and the second four points working out what the problem is?
- Where are the facts and the analysis?

His statement that “changing the purpose of local government won’t make it better”, is a big contender for the quote of the

conference. What might make it better is a review of practices and sophisticated analysis of that review, followed by some informed policy debate before rushing off to amend the Act. Some trends for concern. New Zealand is now a society that has a perception that:

- debt is bad
- local government is the problem, and
- decision-making is bound to the results of consultation.

Geoff Cooper, chief economist at Auckland City Council, gave a refreshing address on innovation and the public sector. Microcredit has revolutionised economics for the poor. Risk plays a massive role in innovation, yet local government values a safe pair of hands over venture. Holly Ransom and Vanisa Dhiru issued a challenge to embrace risk, and to realise that an instant response is demanded by people born after 1985.

Andrew Patterson provided insight about Gen Y and the new 21st century paradigm using the Christchurch student volunteer army as an example of harnessing social capital far more effectively than any level of government could have conceivably achieved (3000 fully equipped volunteers in three weeks). Recommended reading is *Umair Haque Betterness: Economics for Humans*.

Michelle McFadyen (CEO Longreach Regional Council, Queensland) and Andrew Dalziel (CE Hurunui District Council) presented a superb tag-team presentation in “From Outback to the Heartland”. This was a well put together and no-nonsense presentation that did not pitch down to the audience, and perhaps the least condescending talk of the whole conference. Winner of quote of the conference is Michelle’s “Money isn’t everything, but it’s sure up there with oxygen”.

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SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

Stephanie Rose



By Stephanie Rose  
Strategy and Development Manager  
Wanganui District Council

**Attending the SOLGM conference was a fantastic experience and I thank Simpson Grierson for sponsoring my attendance.**

This was my first time at a SOLGM conference and I was extremely impressed by the programme, the calibre of speakers, the opportunities to engage with others and the entertainment – it was certainly a fun and rewarding couple of days.

I found the conference to be extremely relevant and perfectly pitched – not only to the current local government environment but also to my own professional development as I transitioned into a new management role. I appreciated the focus on innovation, the recognition of the wealth of creativity and talent within the sector, the

call for continuous improvement and the challenge to remain responsive and resilient in the face of changing needs and demands. What I took from this was the importance of harnessing these opportunities and taking a proactive approach to shaping change. This is about being adaptable and sustaining our capacity to learn – as one presenter noted, it is about absorbing shocks while retaining our function.

Being able to engage the people we need to enter into this journey with was another particularly useful emphasis – regardless of whether this was made in reference to connecting with our communities or our staff, it was made clear that relationship-building is a key element of being able to deliver quality local services and create desirable communities.

Finally, I was pleased to see the conference's focus on emerging leaders and the forging of connections with Gen



Y (being a borderline member of this generation myself). Wanganui District Council has achieved great success with its youth engagement programmes and the widespread acknowledgement that one size does not fit all, that young people have valid contributions to make and that they should be supported to drive change in their own ways was extremely encouraging.

Thanks for a great conference, SOLGM.

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SIMPSON GRIERSON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AWARD

Steven May



By Steven May  
Regulatory Services Manager  
Waitaki District Council

**Having spent 23 years in central government regulatory roles I am a newcomer to local government with three years under my belt. I was really chuffed at being selected to receive the Simpson Grierson attendance award and thank them as the sponsor for this initiative which allowed me to attend my first SOLGM conference.**

The opening statement from guest speaker Ngahihi o te ra Bidoi: "He tangata, he tangata, he tangata – *it's about the people, the people, the people*" resonated with me and confirmed that key professional relationships are the glue that keeps local and central government functioning.

The value of getting to know another person professionally to "walk in their shoes" enables authentic communication and it is these relationships that cut through the red tape and inertia of process or performance matters.

I met some really inspiring people at the conference and got buoyed up by the level of energy and co-operative spirit among the attendees. With this attitude it's a very exciting future for us in this shared services, local government reforms space.

SOLGM, your role in providing a collective voice for your members is vital in ensuring central government is aware of the passion and skills evident in local government today, so thank you for providing such a professionally run event.

I apologise for those that saw my dancing style at the conference dinner but I was having a ball.



Just off to change my name through DIA so I can apply for the attendance awards again next year....

## ACCOUNTING

# Guide to revaluations

By Avi Chand  
Field Manager Accounting & Advisory  
Deloitte

**Accounting for, and the processing of, revaluations for financial reporting purposes is an area where a large amount of time and money is spent.**

In respect to property, plant and equipment (PP&E), revaluations generally involve the use of external experts and internal resource. With the adoption of NZ IFRS, management estimates and key judgements are becoming increasingly more important in the preparation of the financial statements, leading to accounting estimates that will often have a material impact.

### Auditor Expectations

Auditors are required to confirm the qualifications and independence of each



valuer used and review the validity of all assumptions that may have a material impact on the overall accuracy of the valuation. While a valuer may be engaged to perform the valuation, management and council are ultimately responsible for the preparation of the financial statements.

### Common issues

Common issues in relation to PP&E revaluations include:

- Unclear scope for the work performed by

valuers can cause management confusion and unnecessary in-house duplication of tasks

- incomplete asset management and asset register information provided to external valuers
- lack of review of final valuation reports and "sense checks" before application to the general ledger
- inappropriate assumptions applied by valuers not adequately challenged
- inadequate planning and preparation, underestimating the time and resources required, and
- insufficient documentation.

### Practical solutions

Early engagement with valuers is critical due to the large amount of physical infrastructure assets held by Councils.

This will alleviate some of the headaches

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ACCOUNTING

# Guide to revaluations



associated with revaluation of PP&E. It is also essential that each party agrees to scope and responsibilities early on – allocating adequate time and resource well ahead of year-end will ensure that any issues associated with the valuation can be resolved early.

Ensure that asset information provided to valuers is complete. Simple sense checks, such as checking that the number of records provided to valuers matches your own records, should be applied. Confirm that data is up to date by checking maintenance data and dates when asset managers last inspected physical assets. If it is not up to date, it could be a good time to get a valuer to verify the existence and condition of assets held.

Discuss and review the valuer's work before finalising the valuation report. Robustly review the assumptions applied including, but not limited to, the useful lives of assets,

adjustments to take into account the condition of assets, assumptions in regards to asset use (reserve and recreational use against commercial) and assumptions in regards to the optimisation of assets.

Question changes in assumptions from previous valuations and any differences between other neighbouring Councils. Rely on your overall market knowledge. You should be satisfied in regards to the care and quality of the work performed by the valuer.

A requirement of NZ IAS 16 Property Plant and Equipment is that all assets within a specific asset class have to be revalued for each class subject to valuation. Checking that the final values in the valuation reports

correspond to financial information will ensure that assets are not missed or double counted. Check that the overall movement and final values are in line with your expectations based on discussions with the valuers as well as your own experience.

As a final check, review any circumstances that could impact on the valuation during the period up to the approval of the financial statements.

Specific circumstances that should be taken into account include changes in asset physical condition, strategic plans for specific assets, asset disposals and additions subsequent to the valuation but before the financial year end, and any economic changes which may result in an adjustment to the final valuation.



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THE SKILLS ORGANISATION

# Turning over a new leaf



## It's been a busy time with new opportunities for The Skills Organisation and a new direction for the industry training sector.

### Increase in industry coverage

It has been nearly four months since the merger with the public sector ITO (Learning State), where we assumed coverage of local and central government, and civil defence sectors.

Mergers are a reflection of the changing nature of the industry training sector and illustrates the shared commitment from ITOs to continue to develop and deliver the qualifications and services needed by our industries. One of the key factors behind the mergers was the increased support that would be available to employers and trainees because of the combined resources and services.

Since August we have also assumed coverage for the plumbing, gasfitting, drainlaying

and roofing sectors and December will see Opportunity ITO (crane, scaffolding, rigging, industrial rope access and elevating work platform industries) also merging with The Skills Organisation. This merger is still subject to approval of the Minister of Tertiary Education.

### The Skills Organisation

The industry training world has evolved – from the number of industries we represent to the changing nature of the industry training sector itself. Earlier this year we reviewed what this meant – the result being a new name and new brand.

We feel The Skills Organisation brand better represents what it is we do. Our new identity is simple and easily identifiable across all of our sectors, better reflecting who we have become and how what we do relates to your industry.

### Ministry of Education review

The Skills Organisation responded to the proposals in the Minister of Education's

*Industry Training Review Consultation Document* released on 1 August, 2012.

Our submission deals with each of the 11 policy proposals in turn, and sets out our support or opposition, with reasoning, in response to each of the specific proposals. The Skills Organisation is largely supportive of the changes and clarity provided by the proposals in the consultation document. We believe these changes will result in a stronger, more efficient and effective industry training sector that is better aligned to, and integrated with, the rest of the vocational education and training system.

To keep up-to-date you can:  
visit [skills.org.nz](http://skills.org.nz)  
call 0508 SKILLS  
email [info@skills.org.nz](mailto:info@skills.org.nz)

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# About SOLGM

## Building capability and promoting work excellence in local government.

The New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers (SOLGM) is local government's professional management organisation supporting local government managers and staff in developing their capability and achieving work excellence.

SOLGM works with local government for local government. We are here to help you and your council achieve your goals by providing you with the practical resources you need. We also advocate on your behalf on issues that impact on local government management

### Our Vision

To be the leading influence for local government managers and staff to advance the sustainability of our communities.

### Our Services

- Membership Services (Full and Associate Memberships)
- Professional development opportunities through the SOLGM Opus Business School
- Good practice resources and toolkits
- Representation to influence policy development and implementation
- Nationwide Recruitment and Retention Programme.

### How we work

- We work alongside other sector organisations to provide strategic input on policies and issues that affect local government management.
- We partner with other organisations in New Zealand and overseas to help us achieve our outcomes and deliver quality



Fast track your professional development through the SOLGM Opus Business School.

programmes and services to our members and the wider local government sector.

- We work collaboratively with councils, their managers and staff who voluntarily offer their time, experience and knowledge.

SOLGM is an incorporated society established on 1 January 1988 and is funded from member subscriptions, industry good contributions, trading activity and sponsorship.

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If you would like to know more about sponsorship opportunities with SOLGM, please get in touch with Janice Nadew, Manager, Membership & Communications at 04 978-1288 or [jnadew@solgm.org.nz](mailto:jnadew@solgm.org.nz)

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Read something that interests you?  
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to put your view? Want to find out more?

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*Pulse* is only as good as the contributions  
we get. It is your newsletter, aimed to  
reflect your Society. Let us know if it is (or  
isn't) doing the job.

**Contact: Janice Nadew**

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