



Proceedings  
of the  
Residents2010 Conference

Held in the  
Grand Hall of Parliament  
Wellington, NZ

**10 April 2010**

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# Foreword

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Over the past few years we've seen how much residents' associations contribute to creating a democratic society; many such groups provide the only check-and-balance in communities. Residents' associations have been active in New Zealand for nearly 150 years: the organisers of Residents2010 believed it was time to recognise the importance they play.

So the first ever conference for Wellington Region's residents' associations was held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010 in the Grand Hall of Parliament Buildings. This venue was chosen because it was central and accessible to the wider region and 'neutral ground' for which residents' groups might convene.

The conference aimed to bring together delegates from residents' associations in the Wellington Region, generate coverage in local and national media, spark ongoing activity within Wellington regional residents' associations, and provide inspiration to all who attended. These goals were achieved.

This conference was the first stage in raising awareness of residents' associations to government agencies and the media. It was designed to provide a platform for ideas to be discussed and enable people active in local democracy and community governance to come together, meet, network and form lasting relationships.

FWPRA covered the cost of up to three delegates from any residents' association so attendance was free for these delegates. Food and drinks were provided. Other groups who were interested in sending delegates were charged to assist with catering costs.

Residents' associations in the greater Wellington region were notified of the conference by a letter from Federation of Wellington Progressive and Residents' associations (FWPRA) secretary Tom Law. This was followed-up by phone calls, personal visits and media releases, resulting in a total of 91 delegates.

Remits discussed at this forum have provided a mandate to lobby the Government for more focus on local governance issues, and have shown leadership on behalf of the sector to the public in general.

Residents2010 was seen by the organisers as a starting point for a wider movement of coordination and cooperation amongst residents' associations across the country. This wasn't an end in itself; rather the beginning of a new age of community empowerment.



Jarrod Coburn – Conference Convenor

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## Local Governance, Property and People – Pat Hanley

Presentation to the *Residents 2010 Conference*, 10 April 2010  
Parliament Buildings, Wellington, New Zealand.

Pat Hanley, Chair, Social & Civic Policy Institute



### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide some food for thought relating to our discussions this afternoon on the law, local government, governance of residents' association and future issues. It is my belief that residents' associations may have a critical role to play in the development of local democracy if they are willing to accept the challenge this involves.

I therefore want to talk about the structure of democracy as it has developed over the last 250 years. In this presentation I will advance the proposition that Western Liberal Democracy is not perfect. There is what some have referred to as a "Democratic Deficit" and this deficit is a consequence of the very way in which democratic governments were constructed in the eighteenth century. These limitations have been understood from the time of the establishment of the first democratic governments in the United States and France. Action to redress the "democratic deficit" led to the development of citizens organisations which I will refer to as civil society organisations.

The foundations of civil society organisations are contemporaneous with the development of the democratic state. Fair and free elections, representative government, adherence to the rule of law are essential to democracy but they are not enough. For democracy to be meaningful in the every day life of a people requires active citizenship, the ability to organise and to pursue just causes on behalf of the community and the nation as a whole. This is why civil society organisations have been an essential component of western democracy since its inception.

### Foundations of Western Liberal Democracy

The foundations of western liberal democracy were laid in France in the establishment of the French Republic in 1789. The American Republic was established earlier in 1776 but it is the French model which has been most widely adopted.

The eighteenth century was a time of enormous revolutionary turmoil both politically and in terms of the emergence of industrialism and the demise of agriculture economies. Industrialisation was driven by the property owning middle class who found their endeavours frustrated by the restrictions of feudal society and the arbitrary rules and laws of authoritarian monarchies. The result was the overthrow of the government and its replacement by democratic states.

Prior to the revolutions power was concentrated in the hands of approximately 3% of the population consisting of the aristocracy and the church hierarchy. With the revolutions power was transferred to about 20% of the population and government was dominated by white middle class males. The business of government became the governance of business. Governments became preoccupied with industry, commerce, finance, banking and all those matters seen as essential to advancing the interests of the propertied classes. The role of the military became one of securing and protecting resources and markets for industry.

Democratic power certainly was not equitably distributed across the population. Democratic rights did not extend to women who of course represented about half the population. Women were excluded precisely because they had no property rights. Members of dissenting religions and other minorities were also excluded from participation in the democratic process. In America Black people were also excluded from participation in democracy as they were enslaved and treated as property.

However in ceasing power the middle classes had to rely on the support, or at least a lack of resistance, of the wider population. Therefore in establishing democratic governments promises were made which constituted a commitment to, not simply the advancement of the interests of the propertied classes, but also to the majority of the population in terms of social justice, equality and fundamental rights and freedoms. These promises were contained in the founding documents of both the United States and France.

The US Declaration of Independence of July 4th 1776 contains these famous words:

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do."*

In France the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen which was approved by the National Assembly on August 26th, 1789 included these Articles:

- 1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.*
- 2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.*
- 3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.*
- 6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.*

The importance of commerce and property rights is reflected in the American Declaration which refers to the right of free and Independent states to "establish Commerce" and in the French Declaration Article 17 states:

*"Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified."*

While both the American and French Declarations clearly committed democratic governments to freedom and equality for all, the institutions of democratic government excluded women and minorities and placed the power of the state in the hands of men of property, the bourgeois middle class. But those who were excluded never accepted their inferior status. They believed in the promises of democracy and sought from the outset to challenge the new democratic order.

Indeed in France in October 1789, just 3 months after the Declaration a hungry mob of 7,000 largely working-class women decided to march on the Versailles, taking with them pieces of cannon and other weaponry. This action was followed in November by the "Women's Petition to the National Assembly" which sought "the abolishment of male privilege throughout France.". They insisted upon the "Admittance

of the feminine sex to the district and departmental assemblies and elevated to municipal responsibilities and even as deputies to the National Assembly the consultative and deliberative voices of women."

The petition stated:

*"You have broken the sceptre of despotism, you have pronounced the beautiful axiom [that] ... the French are a free people. Yet still you allow thirteen million slaves shamefully to wear the irons of thirteen million despots! You have divined the true equality of rights—and you still unjustly withhold them from the sweetest and most interesting half among you!"*

The petition failed to win the support of the Assembly. A further inconsistency apparent in the new democracies was the failure to extend individual freedom and equal rights to those people, predominantly African people, who had been sold into slavery. Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams one of the leaders of the American Revolution, wrote in respect to the continuation of slavery that: "it always appeared to me a most iniquitous scheme ...to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have." But slavery like the subjugation of women retained its legitimacy in both the United States and France under democratic governments.

## Structural Inequality

In the context of today's discussions the point I wish to make is that the structural inequality established in the eighteenth century remains in evidence in western liberal democracies today. Women continue to be underrepresented in legislatures and in positions of power within both government and industry and their rates of pay are also less than that paid to their male counterparts. Racial inequality also persists. The inferior position of African Americans in the United States today is attributable to the denial of their rights from the founding of the American Democracy. To this list of those who are underrepresented we can add youth, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. This is the democratic deficit.

Eighteenth century Western liberal democracies exemplified a belief in "rational utility-maximizing individuals". That the greatest good for the greatest number could be achieved by allowing each individual to pursue their own self interest through the market. To achieve this they sought to throw off the restrictions of feudal society and to replace the authoritarian power of the monarch with compliance with the rule of law. Individual rights provided the philosophical basis for industrial and commercial expansion under a policy of *laissez faire* which sought to minimize the interference of the state in the operations of the market.

## Civil Society and the Anti-Slavery movement

Eighteenth century liberalism could be said to promote democracy based on "negative freedoms", that is freedom from the restrictions of the state, culture and tradition. There was however at the time an alternative view of democracy which is referred to as the promotion of positive freedoms. This perspective regarded the democratic state as being an instrument for creating the conditions to enable everyone to exercise their rights, to participate in decision making, and to pursue their own wellbeing.

This perspective of democracy led to what Charles Taylor has described as: "...the arrival of a quiet new phenomenon which has become almost banal in our contemporary world: the mobilizing of a large scale citizen's movement around a moral issue, with the intent of effecting political change."

He describes how the eighteenth century gave rise to the promise of a new age:

*"The new age would be one of reason and benevolence, of freedom and humanitarianism, of equality and justice and self-rule. And of course these ideas of freedom and dignity, in association with the promotion of ordinary life, have steadily eroded hierarchy and promoted equality- and that in all sorts of dimensions, between social classes, races, ethnic and cultural groups, and the sexes." (Taylor p. 387-395)*

The movement for the abolition of slavery marks the beginnings of this quiet revolution based on Universal Justice. The enormity of the task undertaken by this movement is difficult for us to appreciate today precisely because we now regard slavery as entirely, morally reprehensible. This is the critical achievement of this movement.

During the eighteenth century it is estimated that 5.8 million African people were shipped to the New World as slaves. Between 1662 and 1807 (when the trade was outlawed) 3.4 million African people were enslaved by British slave traders. This was 3-4 times the number of voluntary British settlers in the New World (Jay, p. 239).

*"Imagine being torn from your weeping family...forced to walk hundreds of miles until you reach the sea on the West African side of the Atlantic Ocean. You are stripped of your name, your identity, of every right a human being deserves. The European ship that you are forced to board,... (contains) A multitude of black people of every description chained together, with scarcely room to turn, travelling for months, seasick, surrounded by the filth of vomit-filled tubs, into which children often fell, some suffocating. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying renders the whole scene of horror almost inconceivable. Death and disease are all around and only one in six will survive this journey and the brutal, backbreaking labour that follows..."*

The transatlantic slave trade persisted for four centuries ([www.recoveredhistories.org](http://www.recoveredhistories.org)). In 1999 it was estimated that the cost of compensation relating to the slave trade and exploitation of Africa during this period as being in the order of \$777 trillion.

My purpose in describing the slave trade is to indicate the enormous task those who set out to abolish this trade set themselves. To achieve their objectives they had to challenge governments, commercial interests and established religions all of whom condoned and participated in the slave trade. Further, given that they were largely people excluded from the formal political process, they were forced to invent a new form of democracy. They took democracy into their own hands and established the first civil society organisations.

In 1775 The Society for the relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully held in Bondage was established. In 1787 the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed. In 1791 there was a slave revolt which eventually resulted in the founding of Haiti. In 1795 in France, the Declaration of the Rights of Man included the abolition of slavery. In 1807 the British Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act effectively outlawing but not abolishing slavery. Britain abolished slavery in 1838 and other countries followed.

Josiah Wedgewood produced perhaps the first campaign button which depicted a black person on a white background and bearing the motto "Am I not a man and a brother?"

In a statement of 1823, the recently founded Liverpool Society for the Abolition of Slavery attributed its unprecedented success in achieving moral "improvement" to "the practice of combining society itself in intellectual masses, for the purpose of attaining some certain, defined, and acknowledged good, which is generally allowed to be essential to the well-being of the whole." (Taylor pp395-396).

The "combining of society" for the purpose of achieving "acknowledged good" and "essential to the well-being of the whole" constitutes the basis of civil society organisations. Characteristics of the anti-slavery movement which continue to characterise civil society today include:

- **Non Hierarchical** The anti slavery movement was based on equality and inclusion. The movement included African people themselves in leadership roles. Ignatius Sancho and Olaudah Equiano, both African people, were among the most prominent people involved in the movement;
- **Bottom-up** Ordinary people, hence 'civil' society, organised themselves rather than relying on the good will of the rich and powerful or the consent of government;
- **Participatory** The movement established small local committees, held community meetings and lectures, distributed pamphlets and submitted petitions all of which enabled the participation of the public including those otherwise excluded from the political process. These are all familiar methods of organisation today but were very revolutionary at the time;



- **Rights Based** Universal rights were seen as extending to all people based on our shared humanity rather than on privilege or property;
- **Anti-establishment** This movement challenged the state, commercial interests and established moral authority; the churches. These challenges were on moral grounds and were not an attempt to replace the politicians, nor destroy commercial enterprise. What they sought to do was to change the laws and commercial practices based on a vision of the good which required the recognition in law and in the market of universal rights.

The Anti-Slavery movement therefore provided the foundations over time of the human rights and civil rights movements, the women's movement, the movement of people with disabilities and the promotion of gay and lesbians rights. Human rights legislation, anti discrimination laws, universal suffrage, consumer protection measures, are all attributable to the work of civil society organisations through their demands that elected governments give affect to and uphold the principals of democracy.

A similar story can be elucidated in respect of the eighteenth century Romantic Movement and the subsequent development of the environmental and conservation movements. Traditionally man was seen to have dominion over all he surveyed and the right of men to exploit the resources of nature for his own ends. The romantic movement however placed man within nature and saw nature as having inherent value and therefore worthy of respect and a duty of stewardship. From this movement comes the garden city movement, parks, animal protection, environmental protection measures, departments of conversation and so on.

Universal Justice, environmental consciousness and charity are the pillars of modern civil society. They constitute – along with material well being – the requirements of the 'good life' in a moral sense.

Within a democracy people are themselves able to articulate, discuss and debate the requirements of a good life within their community. What is right or wrong, good or bad are not determined by those on high be it church or state. What constitutes the good is contestable and through democratic practices we "negotiate" in order to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number. Reliance on the market remains the preference of neo liberals but they are constrained by civil society organisations for whom the good life requires equality, justice and freedom for all.

Indeed the freedom to participate in critical evaluation and in the process of value formation is among the most crucial freedoms of social existence. The choice of social values cannot be settled merely by the pronouncements of those in authority who control the levers of government.

*"The relevant freedoms include the liberty of acting as citizens who matter and whose voices count, rather than living as well-fed well clothed and well entertained vassals. Restrain the worst excesses of self interest by means of regulation (the state) and by internalized shared values (community)." (Sen, 1999)*

This has become the fundamental role of civil society. To articulate our beliefs, moral principals and vision of the good society and to constantly and persistently challenge the status quo and those interests who most benefit from our collective failure to address the issues of poverty, injustice and the environmental degradation of the planet upon which we all depend.

A comparison can be made of the Liberal State and Civil Society in terms of the focus or orientation of each. These comparative factors exist along a continuum and are not entirely absent one from the other. For example governments do attempt to encourage citizen participation and civil society organisations may seek to represent sectors of the community. Social values are incorporated in legislation and some civil society organisations will engage in commercial enterprises. The Table below should be read as representing the tendencies of the State and Civil Society organisations rather than as opposing concepts.



## COMPARATIVE FEATURES OF THE LIBERAL STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The Liberal State	Civil Society Organisations
Property	People
Representation	Participation
Freedom From	Freedom To
The primacy of Self Interest	The primacy of Common Interests
Ideology	Moral Purpose
Market Values	Social Values

### Local government

Local government in New Zealand was established on firm liberal principals. Its focus was clearly on property interests. The electoral franchise was property based, one vote per property. Local government revenue was based primarily on a land tax or rates. The functions of local government were prescribed by central government as relating principally to services to property.

Local government representation has also reflected the inequalities associated with eighteenth century liberal democracies. Women, Maori and other ethnic groups, youth and people with disabilities have all been underrepresented throughout the history of local government in New Zealand.(Massey p.26)

The most recent figures I have available are for 1998 at which time 28% of elected local government members were women. In other words there were 3 times as many men on Councils as women.

In 1998 93% of local body candidates were NZ European, 5.5% Maori and 1.5% other) and 94% were aged over 40.

The local government reforms of 2002 attempted to shift local government away from a focus on property and towards community wellbeing and more inclusive, participatory decision making. It is worth noting I think that the Minister of Local Government responsible for the 2002 Act was both a woman and Maori, the Honourable Sandra Lee.

The Local Government Act 2002 describes the purpose of local government in Part 2 Section 10, as:

- (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of communities, in the present and for the future.

Section 14 of the Act describes the principles relating to local authorities and states:

- (b) a local authority should make itself aware of, and should have regard to, the views of all of its communities; and
- (c) when making a decision, a local authority should take account of-
  - (i) the diversity of the community, and the community's interests, within its district or region; and
  - (ii) the interests of future as well as current communities; and
  - (iii) the likely impact of any decision on each aspect of well-being referred to in section 10.
- (d) a local authority should provide opportunities for Maori to contribute to its decision-making processes.

The Local Government Act 2002 delivered real, tangible benefits to my community, Pukerua Bay in Porirua. The Porirua City Council embraced the reforms and developed, among other things, a village planning programme which exemplified both a commitment to community wellbeing and local democratic decision making and action. Issues which had been unresolved for years were finally addressed. A skate park that had been neglected for 30 years was redeveloped to the benefit of our youth. Attention was given to footpaths and walkways which increased accessibility and safety within our community. Our plan addressed issues beyond the responsibility of the local Council but the Council supported us and where appropriate provided technical assistance.

Virtually all of these very local matters involve questions of equity and fairness and are best resolved through participatory processes involving genuine negotiation and compromise in the interests of the whole community.

## Current Reforms

However, the reforms currently underway as exemplified by the Auckland Super City legislation appears to be once again firmly in the eighteenth century tradition and will be less democratic and contribute to growing inequality in the region.

In respect of representation it will inevitably be less representative and there is clearly no intention to address the issue of equity. Dr Pita Sharples has put the issue in very clear terms in an interview on National Radio.

Dr. Sharples said on Radio New Zealand's Morning report programme:

*"There is a democratic process but it's not working for Maori, they are outside of that system ... the principal of one person one vote will not give Maori representation.*

*"Unless we find some ways for them to be more involved, that is user friendly to their culture, then we have to do something else and I believe seats for Maori is the answer,"*

Dr. Sharples went on to state that the essence of democracy is not one person one vote, which he describes as an "artificial political concoction" but "goals towards equity ... and inclusiveness" (Stuff.co.nz). He was of course attacked for "muddled thinking" by media commentators and some MPs.

There are currently 254 elected councillors in the Auckland region. These will be replaced by 146 elected representatives, a 40 % reduction in representation. However of these 146 representatives only 21, the Auckland Mayor and 20 Councillors will have regulatory powers. A reduction of 90% in the number of elected representatives with real power.

Democratic decision making is further reduced by the establishment of Council Controlled Organisations (CCO's) which will have control of Council Investments, Economic Development, Tourism, Events, Major Regional Facilities, Property Holdings, Waterfront development and Auckland Transport.

An Auckland Transition Authority discussion documents states that:

*"CCO's are focused on achieving a constrained set of business objectives. Local Boards can represent the interest of their communities by providing input to the Governing Body (i.e. Council) as to the development of the Statement of Intent for each CCO. ...The public will also have opportunities to comment on the service delivery of CCO's either through the Governing Body or Local Boards."*

Therefore a very large proportion of the activities of local government in Auckland will be free from the restrictions of democratic accountability and able to focus on commercial objectives which will it is hoped deliver the greatest good for the greatest number. This market model of provision of public goods and services shifts the emphasis from the community to the individual consistent with liberal ideology. It also increases the likelihood of further inequality in service provision.

## Inequality and Local Governance

Is inequality an issue for local government let alone Residents' associations? It is held that New Zealanders regard this country as egalitarian, a place where everyone gets a fair go. However as both the Ministry of Social Development and The New Zealand Institute have reported since the 1980's New Zealand has become a less equal society.

Neo-Liberal reforms with which we are all familiar have contributed to this growth in inequality for reasons which have been identified since the eighteenth century. The further extension of reforms, based on the same ideology, to local government will also contribute to increased inequality.

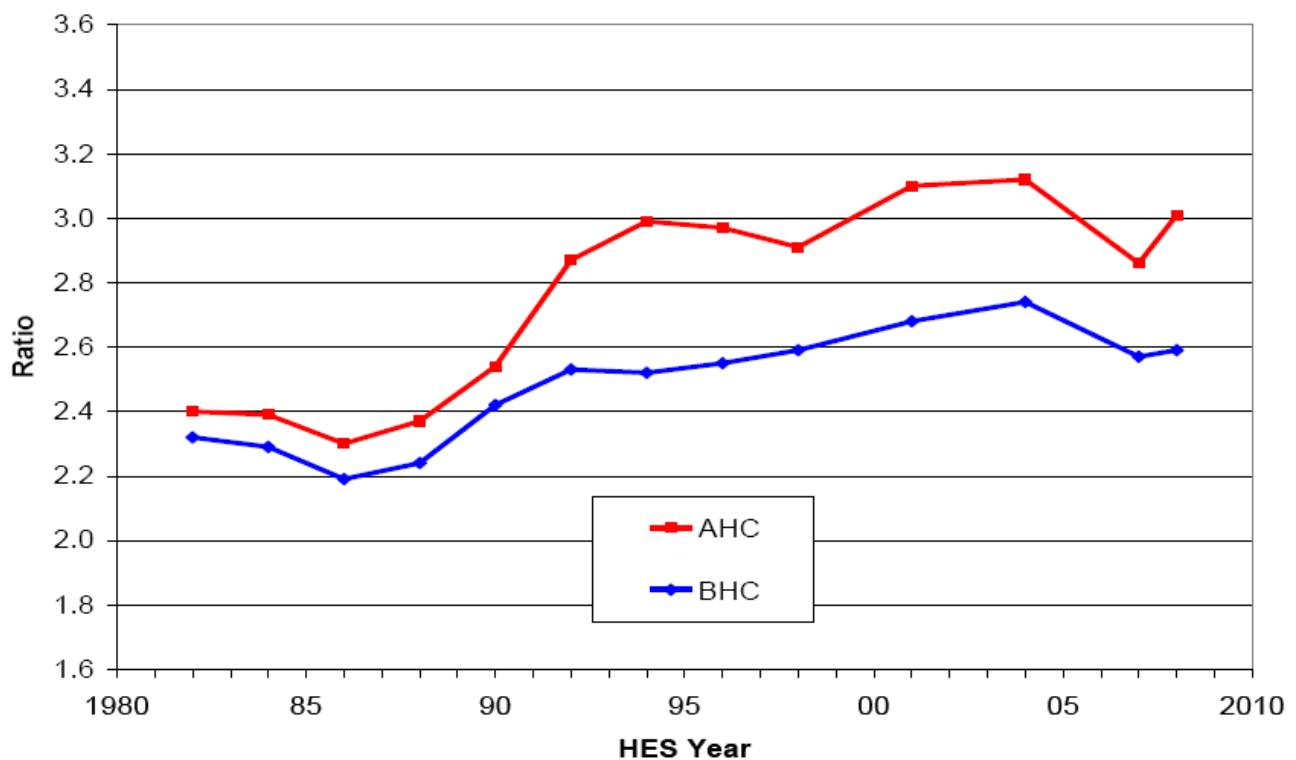
Evidence of inequality from a MSD Report include the following:

*"The large increase in inequality from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, the steady continuing rise to 2004 and the decline due to WFF through to 2007 are robust findings.*

*"Without the [Working For Families] package, the New Zealand rate (of child poverty) would have been around 30% in 2008, higher than in any EU nation other than Turkey (based on 2006 EU figures)." (Ministry of Social Development, June 2009)*

The table below shows that in 1982 (following the red line) incomes of the highest earners was 2.4 times the incomes of the lowest earners. By 2005 this had increased to 3.1 times the earnings of the lowest earners. This represents a 77% increase in the gap between the highest earners and the lowest.

**Income inequality in New Zealand: the P80/P20 ratio, 1982 to 2008**



HES = Household Economic Survey  
AHC = After housing costs  
BHC = Before housing costs

From 1994 to 2008 both low and high income households experienced increased incomes however:

*"The difference in growth rates ... between 1994 to 2008 is actually quite small, but the average 2.3% annual growth for those in the highest income decile resulted in an additional \$15,800 whereas the 2.1% growth rate for households in the lowest income decile provided only an additional \$3,600."*

The impact of inequality is shown by reference to life expectancy.

*"On average people who earn the least, in the bottom decile of income, live 6-7 year shorter lives than those who are in the top income decile. Maori, on average, have life expectancies 8-9 years shorter than non-Maori. The differences are even greater for men. Life expectancy for male Maoris is only around 1 year above the global life expectancy of 69." (NZ Institute, March 2010)*

Why should Councils and Residents' associations be concerned with inequality, isn't this a central government responsibility?

As with the central government reforms of the 1980's and 90' Councils will be under pressure to keep taxes i.e. rates at the current levels or reduce them. To meet the predictable budget deficits they will introduce increases in fees and charges for services. Households are likely to see increases in the costs of library services, entry to pools and other recreation facilities, increased cost for rubbish removal, increased costs of public transport and so on. They are also likely to see a reduction in services as well.

Increase in fees and charges will be the same for everyone without regard to income and therefore the Liberal argues they are fair and equitable, everyone pays the same. However if we consider questions of equity and fairness the position is very different.

Lets assume every household in your community faces increased fees and charges for Council services of \$100.00 in a year:

If my net disposable income is \$50,000 that \$100 equals 2 tenths of 1% of my disposal income. However if my net disposable income is \$15,000 that same \$100 equals 7 tenths of 1% of my disposable income. Relatively inequality is increased by a factor of 3.5.

*"In order to contain dissent, liberal democratic governments have been pressured to find ways to allow the public greater input. There have been two distinct ways of responding to this pressure: through increased privatisation of decision making and the use of markets to expand opportunities for choice, or through the expansion of opportunities for public involvement in public sector decision making.... Using the market place to provide government services shifts the emphasis of government from the community to the individual." (Massey p.10-11)*

Under the New Public Management, which has been part of the reforms since the 1980's, private sector management techniques are incorporated into public sector decision making with elected representatives becoming managers of managers rather than representatives of communities. Further the citizen is redefined as a consumer.

In a discussion document on the proposed Council Controlled Organisations the Auckland Transition Agency states:

*"For the Auckland Council to plan and deliver the infrastructure and services to meet its requirements, it will need access to the best commercial and engineering expertise and resources. CCO structures and boards of directors can bring these required skills and expertise.*

*"In contrast to councils, CCOs are focussed on achieving a constrained set of business objectives. Local Boards can represent the interest of their communities by providing input to the Governing Body (i.e. Council) as to the development of the SOIs (Statement of Intent) for each CCO.*

*"The public will also have opportunities to comment on the service delivery of CCOs either through the Governing Body or Local Boards." (ATA Discussion document)*

The CCO's will be commercial enterprises with no requirements to operate in a manner which is neither democratic nor equitable. For these organisations the community will be invisible and there will be no access to these bodies by Residents' associations. They will operate as the "invisible hand" of local government. I am reminded of the words of that great neo-liberal reformer, Margaret Thatcher, who said "There is no such thing as Society".

## Residents' associations

What then is the role and responsibility of residents' associations faced with the challenges arising out of the current reforms. Some Residents' association do not fit the description of civil society organisations I have outlined here. Rather they function essentially as persistent irritants on the backside of local bodies. Their agendas are largely reactive to the actions of the local council rather than based on the aspirations of their communities.

Other Residents' associations however can be seen as seeking to advance the interests of their community through participatory processes (local surveys, community meetings, household newsletters, web sites) and creating opportunities for local people to engage with their Councils and local representatives consistent with the methods of civil society organisations over the past 250 years.

If local councils become less representative and less willing to engage with their communities and adopt increasingly commercial practices they will become increasingly isolated from residents and the issues that matter within our communities. If this were to occur it is entirely possible that Residents' associations would become less effective as spokespersons for their communities. The barriers to participation would simply be too great.

In the eighteenth century ordinary people faced with the challenge of exclusion from the democratic process took democracy in to their own hands. They talked, discussed and debated. They formed little committees, wrote letters, signed petitions, held public meetings, listened to guest speakers and mounted campaigns. So what has changed?

It is worth noting that over two and a half centuries civil society organisations have never established a central coordinating body, no head office, no central leadership or great messiah. There is no single unifying ideology but there is a consistent commitment to democratic principles. They have remained, with a few exceptions, relatively small scale, bottom up, non-hierarchical, participatory and inclusive. The best comparison I can think of is with the very modern internet.

I would therefore suggest that residents' associations must strive to occupy the "civil society space". The very existence of residents' associations provides a vehicle which can be used by communities as required to address the issues and concerns they themselves identify. This may mean less focus on the Councils agenda and more on the aspirations of our communities including most importantly those who are most marginalised.

There is no requirement for Councils to engage with residents' associations except as they choose. However there are also no barriers to the formation of residents' associations other than the desire of residents to participate. How then do we make participation more relevant to more people? Simply knowing that our associations exist would be a start. Better use of the media and the internet not as a means of getting our names up in lights but as tools for educating the public as to what is possible through citizens acting as citizens together.

If there is more centralisation of local government a more coordinated approach to issues and concerns would be an appropriate response but retaining at the same time, a very bottom up small scale structure would also be appropriate. Larger structures could mean less involvement not more, which is the very issue we would be trying to address if representation at the Council level is reduced.

A good deal more could be done to educate ourselves and the public on the fundamental meaning of democracy and the values it represents. This is a need which is made apparent when one considers the reaction to Pita Sharples comments regarding representation and equity. Using the language of democracy, words like social justice, equality, and human rights to frame issues of local concern may also be a more powerful tool rather than being dragged into debates over cost /benefit, financial accountability and similar corporate speak.

Story telling is a powerful tool and the internet provides a cost effective means of sharing our tales of battles lost and won. Also sharing of resource materials and organisational experiences can be very effective.

Finally I would wish to return to the issue of equality/inequality as it relates to the work of residents' associations. Democracy is not about elections, it's about who gets what, and it's about privilege and equality. I would like to think that residents' associations have the capacity to challenge those who would deny ordinary people the right to be involved in decisions which directly affect them and those who would increase the costs of public goods and services in a manner which contributes to increased inequality and divisiveness within our communities.

I would remind you again of the words of Amartya Sen:

*"The relevant freedoms include the liberty of acting as citizens who matter and whose voices count, rather than living as well-fed well clothed and well entertained vassals."*

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# Conference Address – Chief Ombudsman

Notes prepared to assist delegates in discussing the issues of managing complaints about local government processes and practices and citizens' access to information.

Beverley A Wakem – Chief Ombudsman



## Introduction

Thank you for inviting me to help bring to a close events at the first ever conference of residents' associations in New Zealand. The very fact that this conference is occurring demonstrates both a growing concern by residents' associations about ratepayers' interactions with their Councils and a willingness to engage at a regional, and perhaps a national level, to contribute more vigorously to the debate about governance and policy development which will shape the society we live in. Particularly to respond proactively to the changes which may affect the structure of local government in the wake of the establishment of a "super city" in Auckland and the merging of DHB's – among two recent developments.

From where I sit as an Ombudsman, looking out over New Zealand and the nature and quality of transactions between the governed and the governing, I am more than ever convinced that residents' associations play a very valuable role, in what is an increasingly fragmented society, in educating the wider community about issues which will affect them and in reflecting their concerns to Councils at every level.

None can question the motivation and dedication of people who freely give their time and effort to advocate for, and represent their local communities. They represent in their membership, talents, skills and know-how which not only bear upon their function of advocating on behalf of ratepayers, but are also a fruitful source of expertise for Councils that is, I suspect, not drawn on often enough by those bodies.

Many residents' associations are already very active and sophisticated operations – with their own websites, Wikipedia pages, newsletters, online forums and bulletin boards – even sponsors. Today has set the scene for even greater levels of coordination, support and information dissemination between residents' associations.

I was once a member of something called The Commission for the Future. What struck me then is that all over New Zealand there were people beavering away on common issues but without any linkage to one another to share ideas about processes and practices that worked well in specific situations. I suspect that's still a prevalent experience.

Local bodies have Local Government New Zealand to use (among other things) as a clearing house for ideas and best practice, and importantly to speak on their behalf on matters of national importance.

It would be a good outcome of today's discussions if a national Residents and Ratepayers group was to emerge to begin a conversation about matters which affect us all and which will enable a more considered participation in the democratic process than is sometimes our experience.

Delegates have already learnt a lot today about effective ways of engaging with local councils and communities and the main themes which have emerged are not news to anyone here.

I would like to add some information about the work we do as Ombudsmen in the area of local government, and some tools you may be able to use to become more effective advocates for your communities. In the workshop on aspects of local government law and the use of the Ombudsmen Act and the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) and in conversation with delegates throughout the day, it became clear to me that knowledge of how you can use these Acts to assist your work may not be as widespread as it should be. That presents a challenge for my Office and it is one we are attempting to address in a variety of ways.



So, to start the process, here are a few thought starters on key issues such as complaints about maladministration, requests for official information and local authority meetings.

## **Complaints about maladministration**

Local government – comprising regional, district, and city councils, community boards, and many other local organisations – carries out a huge range of functions, the exercise of which can have a big impact on the lives of citizens: resource management; roading and transport; civil defence; community well-being and development; environmental health and safety; building control; and infrastructure planning and maintenance. It's not surprising then that citizens sometimes feel aggrieved about decisions, acts, recommendations or omissions that have affected them personally.

## **The Ombudsmen Act**

In the Ombudsmen Act 1975, Parliament has given the Ombudsmen the function of investigating the administrative acts and decisions of central and local government agencies that affect a person or persons in their personal capacity. Our jurisdiction covers regional, district, and city councils, as well as community boards and council-controlled organisations within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2002. After investigating, we form an opinion on whether the act or decision was:

- contrary to law;
- unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory, or in accordance with a law or practice that was unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory;
- based on a mistake of law or fact; or
- just plain wrong – that is, a decision that no one in their right mind could have made.

We may also form the opinion that a discretionary power has been exercised for an improper purpose, or on irrelevant grounds, or has taken into account irrelevant considerations; or that in the exercise of the discretionary power reasons for the decision should have been given and were not.

We can make any recommendation we consider appropriate in the circumstances; for instance that an 'omission' should be rectified, a decision cancelled or varied, practices should change, laws should be reconsidered, or any other step should be taken. So while our recommendations may address an individual's specific grievance, they can have a wider impact too if the source of that grievance is a systemic issue. Although our recommendations are not binding, they are usually accepted.

There are, however, some limitations on our powers under the Ombudsmen Act.

## **Committees of the whole**

A significant one in the local government context is that Ombudsmen can only investigate the acts or decisions of a committee of the Council – but not where that committee is a committee of the whole Council – and actions of Council officers, employees or members. This limitation also applies to all other local organisations subject to the Ombudsmen Act.

The effect of this limitation is to put outside our oversight decisions concerning such matters as the setting of rates and various fees (e.g. dog registration fees, building and resource consent application fees), which are decisions that cannot be delegated downwards by the agency concerned.

However, an Ombudsman may investigate recommendations provided to a Council or an organisation by its officers or committees. Such an investigation may lead to a recommendation that the chief executive ask the Council or organisation to reconsider the matter afresh in light of new or different information.

## Appeal rights

Another significant limitation is that Ombudsmen are not authorised to investigate acts or decisions for which there is a statutory right of appeal to a court or tribunal (unless there are special circumstances that would make it unreasonable for that right to have been exercised).

For this reason, the involvement of the Ombudsmen in Resource Management Act (RMA)-related complaints is limited, because there are extensive rights of review and appeal to the Environment Court. However, an Ombudsman can investigate some RMA-related complaints, such as the enforcement of conditions on consent, refusals to reduce or refund fees or concerns about the standard of service provided in assessing resource consent applications.

An Ombudsman can also investigate decisions not to notify applications for resource consents. However, this does not affect the decision to approve the resource consent. The only way to overturn or modify resource consents that have already been granted is to seek judicial review. It is for this reason that in a number of our annual reports we have urged councils to take care when deciding not to notify a resource consent application.

## Adequate alternative remedy

An Ombudsman also has the discretion not to investigate a complaint if there is an adequate remedy or right of appeal to which the complainant could reasonably resort. This discretion reflects the position that an Ombudsman's investigation is a "remedy of last resort". An Ombudsman will not usually commence an investigation until a complainant has first raised their concerns with the agency.

## Complaining to the agency first

This means that it is important that agencies – including those in the local government sector – have in place effective internal complaints-handling processes. We made this point in our last annual report when we noted that we were seeing a number of complaints (mostly noise and drainage-related complaints) where the issues raised by the complainants were not sufficiently addressed by local authorities until a complaint was made to us. We will be pursuing the issue of effective internal complaints-handling processes in our ongoing interactions with central and local government.

It also means that complainants need to know how to raise their concerns effectively – and that is potentially where residents' associations may have a useful role to play. Some key components would be:

1. Knowledge – arm yourself: Ask for information about the issue. Do you have all the facts? Make sure there is not a simple misunderstanding. It is good to find out about the organisation's policies. This is where LGOIMA or the Privacy Act can be helpful.
2. Think things through: Identify the key issues in the complaint. Think about what actually happened. When and where did it happen? Clarify the issue – what is it that affects you? What outcome do you want? For example do you want an apology, a change in policy, a change in the decision? Identify some options for resolving your complaint.
3. Keep records: It's a good idea for you to record information about the issue, what you have done to try to sort it out and who you have been dealing with. Make a folder for all correspondence. It is usually best to write a letter of complaint, particularly if you are dealing with a large organisation. However, an initial phone call may help to clarify some of the issues.
4. Follow the Process: Find out what process the organisation has for people who want to make a complaint and follow it.
5. Be persistent: If nothing happens, call or write again to the organisation to check on the progress of your complaint. If they are unable to provide you with an update, make it clear to the person you are dealing with that the problem will not go away unless it is resolved.
6. If you're unsuccessful: If your concerns have not been resolved you can take them to the Ombudsmen.

## Requests for official information

No doubt many of you are very familiar with the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA). There are some obvious provisions with which you will already be familiar. However, there are some lesser known or used provisions of LGOIMA, which may be useful tools for residents' associations.

First, I observe that the numbers of complaints under LGOIMA have been tracking upwards in recent years. Last year saw an increase of 11 per cent over the previous year to 231. While this still seems a relatively small number given the size of the local government sector in New Zealand, the increase could signify a greater degree of interest in decisions of local authorities and greater use of LGOIMA by individual ratepayers and media to seek information about those decisions.

In the past year, we had two high profile LGOIMA investigations. There was a request by the Christchurch Press for the amount paid by Christchurch City Council for the Ellerslie Flower Show. I formed the opinion that the request should not have been refused and recommended disclosure. The Council complied with my recommendation. This case led my colleague, Ombudsman David McGee, and I to develop general principles of application to requests for information about local authority events funding (available on our website [www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz)).

There was also a request by the Dominion Post for Hawkes' Bay Regional Council's Hazardous Activities and Industries List (listing potentially contaminated sites). In that case, Dr McGee formed the opinion there was no good reason to withhold the list (his detailed finding in this regard is also available on our website). He did not consider that commercial interests or confidentiality justified withholding. While he accepted there may be a privacy interest in some information pertaining to individual landowners, he considered this was outweighed by the public interest in the public having access to information about potentially contaminated sites, so that they are in a position to assess for themselves whether there are any risks to the environment or to their person.

In the current context – with the significant changes that are underway in relation to governance arrangements, and with Councils' increasing involvement in commercial enterprises – I expect the upwards trend in LGOIMA complaints will continue.

Now, to those lesser known provisions. Your ordinary everyday LGOIMA request is one made under Part 2 of that Act. There are other parts, particularly Parts 3 and 4, which often escape people's attention.

## Requests for internal rules affecting decisions

In Part 3 of LGOIMA, section 21 provides a "right" of access to internal rules affecting decisions – that is, to any document (including a manual), which is held by a local authority and which contains policies, principles, rules or guidelines in accordance with which decisions or recommendations are made in respect of any person or body of persons in their personal capacity.

This is different from Part 2 under which people "may request" official information held. Section 21 provides for a "right of access". The reasons for refusing a request for internal rules affecting decisions are more limited. Those reasons relate to maintenance of the law, safety of persons, privacy, commercial prejudice, confidentiality, commercial activities and negotiations.

Requesters and agencies are often unaware that special provisions apply to this particular type of official information.

## Requests for statements of reasons

Also in Part 3, there is another "right of access" by a person to reasons for decisions affecting that person. Section 22 provides that where a local authority makes a decision or recommendation that affects a person in his or its personal capacity, that person has a right to be given a written statement of:

- the findings on material issues of fact;

- a reference to the information on which the findings were based; and
- the reasons for the decision or recommendation.

The proviso is that the request must be made within a reasonable time after the decision or recommendation.

Again there are limited reasons for refusing such requests, relating to maintenance of the law, the safety of persons, and commercial prejudice. There are also certain circumstances in which a local authority is justified in not providing a reference to the information on which the findings were based.

The thing that makes section 22 different is that it is not just a right to request official information already held. Compliance with section 22 requires an agency to create information in order to respond to a request.

Section 22 is a useful, but often overlooked, tool for people wanting to know why a local authority has taken a particular decision that affects them. By using it effectively, people can better “arm themselves” with the knowledge necessary to pursue their complaints.

For instance, someone may be aggrieved that a Council has declined to exercise the discretion to waive a fee. They may request all information held by the Council in relation to their request under Part 2 of LGOIMA and the Privacy Act. They may request the Council’s policies or guidelines on waiving fees under section 21 of LGOIMA. They may request a statement of the Council’s reasons for declining their request under section 22 of LGOIMA. Armed with this information they can decide whether they think the Council has acted reasonably, or whether it is worth pursuing a complaint with the Council, and ultimately the Ombudsman.

I should note that the rights conferred by sections 21 and 22 are statutory rights that may be enforced through the courts. I should also note that an Ombudsman’s recommendations under Parts 3 and 4 do not create a public duty.

## **Requests by bodies corporate for personal information**

Part 4 of LGOIMA gives a person a right to access information about that person, and a right to request the correction of that information. This should sound familiar to those of you who know about the Privacy Act. When the Privacy Act came into force in 1993, “natural” people’s rights to access information about themselves, and to request the correction of that information, went into that legislation. LGOIMA continued to provide those rights to “legal” people – or bodies corporate. Again, the reasons for refusing requests for personal information about bodies corporate are limited, so, for instance, a request could not be refused on the grounds of section 7(2)(f)(i) – free and frank expressions of opinion necessary for the effective conduct of public affairs. I understand that most residents’ associations are bodies corporate, and they may at times be interested in obtaining official information about themselves. Such requests must be considered under Part 4 of LGOIMA, not Part 2.

## **Council-controlled organisations**

At this point, I note that the application of LGOIMA to council-controlled organisations has been a hot topic lately. Council-controlled organisations are nothing new, but the issue attracted some attention recently in the context of the Auckland super city when the Government legislated for three council-controlled organisations.

I would like to clarify that council-controlled organisations are subject to Parts 1 – 6 of LGOIMA, by virtue of section 74 of the Local Government Act 2002. So people can request official information from them, including “internal rules” and statements of reasons. However, council-controlled organisations are not subject to Part 7 of LGOIMA, which contains the meetings provisions.

## Local authority meetings

Part 7 then, places certain obligations on local authorities with regard to the conduct of meetings, including obligations relating to the notification of meetings, availability of agendas and minutes and public admission to meetings.

Most of you will be quite familiar with the requirements around notification of meetings and availability of agendas and minutes. I thought I would focus on the often contentious area of public exclusions from local authority meetings.

## When is a meeting a meeting?

Part 7 of LGOIMA only applies to “meetings” as defined in the legislation. Section 45(2) makes it clear that “a meeting ... at which no resolutions or decisions are made is not a meeting” for the purposes of Part 7. So if there are no resolutions or decisions made, it is not a meeting, and the obligations set out in Part 7 don’t apply.

This has caused some confusion in the past when local authorities held “workshops” to which the public were not admitted. The meetings provisions in Part 7 cannot be avoided just by calling a meeting a workshop. If a “workshop” meets the definition of “meeting”, including the requirement that resolutions or decisions are made, then Part 7 applies. However, local authorities are entitled to hold private workshops to debate and find out more about an issue.

Ombudsmen have commented on this issue in previous annual reports (2002 and 2003):

*“...it was noted that local authorities needed to be careful where a ‘workshop’ has been held to discuss an issue, ... not [to] create a perception that the matter has been predetermined when the issue is brought to an open meeting for deliberation and decision.”*

## When can local authorities exclude the public from meetings?

So when can local authorities exclude the public from meetings?

The starting point, in section 47 of LGOIMA, is that every meeting of a local authority shall be open to the public. This is consistent with section 14(1)(a)(i) of the Local Government Act, which states that a local authority should conduct its business in an open, transparent and democratically accountable manner. However, this does not mean that all Council business must be conducted in public. Section 48 of LGOIMA sets out the specific circumstances in which local authorities can exclude the public from meetings.

These circumstances are:

1. that public conduct of the meeting would be likely to result in disclosure of information there would be good reason to withhold under sections 6 or 7 of LGOIMA (there is one exception to this: the public cannot be excluded from a meeting because of a concern to protect the free and frank expression of opinions);
2. that public conduct of the meeting would be contrary to the provisions of an enactment or constitute contempt of court;
3. that the purpose of the meeting is to consider an Ombudsman’s recommendation under LGOIMA;
4. if it is necessary to enable the local authority to deliberate in private on its decision or recommendation in proceedings where there is a right of appeal to a court or tribunal against the authority’s decision, or the authority is required by an enactment to make a recommendation.

Public exclusions must be done by resolution stating the general subject matter to be considered while the public is excluded and the reason for the exclusion (mostly this will be in relation to the particular interests protected by section 6 or 7 of LGOIMA).

A resolution must:

- be put when the meeting is open to public;
- be available to any member of public present; and
- form part of the minutes of the local authority.

In addition, section 50 of LGOIMA provides that a member of the public may be required to leave a meeting if the person presiding at the meeting “...believes, on reasonable grounds, that the behaviour of any member of the public attending that meeting is likely to prejudice or to continue to prejudice the orderly conduct of that meeting....”.

## **What if you are unhappy with a decision to exclude?**

So what can be done if you are unhappy with a decision to exclude? Well there is nothing to preclude you from requesting information pertaining to the meeting.

Section 51(3)(a) states that any request for the minutes of any part of a meeting where the public has been excluded is deemed to be a request for official information under LGOIMA. Such requests must be considered on their own merits. The fact that the public has been excluded from part or all of a meeting does not mean the relevant minutes and associated material can automatically be withheld if requested. Often the need to withhold official information can abate over time and as circumstances change.

There are also limited circumstances in which a decision to exclude the public may be the subject of a complaint to the Ombudsmen. If the decision was taken by a full Council, community board, or other agency, then, as noted above, we will have no jurisdiction to consider the matter. But if the decision was taken by a committee we may. Of course, being a remedy of last resort, we would expect a complainant to first raise their concerns with the relevant local authority. If, having done so, the complainant remained dissatisfied, we may consider investigating.

Such an investigation would look at the information available to the committee during the public excluded session, and consider the committee’s reasons for excluding the public. We would form a view as to whether, in light of this information, the committee’s decision was one that was reasonably open to it.

In one of my cases, a local authority decided to exclude the public during consideration and discussion of a report on a commercial venture. The report and discussion canvassed detailed Council-prepared cost estimates which, if disclosed, would have been likely to prejudice anticipated negotiations with successful tenderers. I formed the opinion that it was reasonably open to the committee to decide under section 48 to exclude the public in terms of section 7(2)(i) of LGOIMA, which applies where withholding is necessary to enable a local authority to carry on negotiations without prejudice or disadvantage.

An example of an unlawful exclusion came up on one of Ombudsman David McGee’s cases. In that case, the relationship between a committee and a particular member of the public had unfortunately broken down. As a means of managing that, the committee met on private business premises, effectively excluding the member of the public.

The committee had not utilised section 48 (which sets out the circumstances in which a public authority may by resolution exclude the public), or section 50 (which provides for a member of the public to be excluded if the presiding officer believes on reasonable grounds that their behaviour is prejudicing the orderly conduct of the meeting). The Ombudsman therefore concluded the committee had acted “contrary to law”, specifically, contrary to section 47 of LGOIMA which provides that local authority meetings shall be open to the public.



## Central government

Now I have made an assumption that your primary area of interest will be in the local government area, so before concluding, I want to acknowledge that the actions of central government agencies too will be of interest and concern to residents' associations. For instance, former Chief Ombudsman John Belgrave once considered a complaint by a residents' association concerning a decision by Transit New Zealand not to proceed with construction of a roundabout. I would simply say that central government agencies are also subject to the Ombudsmen Act, and to the Official Information Act, and therefore the same principles I have discussed today (barring the local authority meetings provisions) apply to them.

## Conclusion

I hope that this analysis will be helpful to you in the process of engaging with your local, district or regional council.

Finally, I would say, "It's OK to complain" but you also have a responsibility to do so in a manner that is focussed and constructive.

It's also OK and is your right to have access to information that will help you to participate fully in the democratic process.

To councils I would say, make sure your officials understand and abide by the requirements of the Local Government Act, the Ombudsmen Act and LGOIMA. Too often, in my experience, there is variable knowledge of these important legislative instruments that govern your work. With increasing turnover of staff, core knowledge is being diluted, and for some newer staff – particularly those from a private sector background, these Acts are not well known and, in some extreme cases, are clearly ignored. That will lead to unnecessary exposure for Councils.

Today's conference and the discussions and information exchange which has taken place will, I am sure, contribute positively to the health of democracy in New Zealand and to better informed decisions at every level of governance.

**Beverley Wakem**  
Chief Ombudsman  
April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010



# Workshop Reports

The bulk of the conference was dedicated to six workshops. The three workshops in the morning were focused around external matters. The afternoon workshops had an internal focus.

The workshops served a dual purpose. The first was to allow a space to discuss issues pertinent to the delegates and their organisations. The second purpose was to discuss, amend, and agree on a number of 'remits' (recommendations) that were voted on by all delegates in the closing session.

Workshops were facilitated by a range of community and local governance experts who brought a wide variety of knowledge and experience to the conference. The facilitator's role was to encourage delegates to contribute to the workshop and assist the formation of a recommendation for the conference at large.

The workshops were hindered by the acoustics of the venue, a lack of intimate space – away from other workshops – and limited time (90 minutes). Having said that, it was apparent from comments made on the day and subsequently that delegates found these workshops to be a useful space for discourse and reflection.

Many delegates also commented on feelings of "relief", "affirmation", and "togetherness" that they derived from being in a group of fellow travellers. It was a revelation to many that other residents' associations shared similar issues.

Another obvious outcome of the workshops was the sharing and transference of institutional knowledge amongst delegates.

## Morning Workshop Sessions (external focus)

Title	Facilitators	Details
Engaging with your Council	Roger Tweedy Mike MacLeod	What is essential engagement, what types of engagement work well, who should you talk to, building and sustaining a relationship with your Council
Working alongside community	Jarrold Coburn	Promoting yourself in the community, research and surveys, working with the media
Building stronger local democracy	Pat Hanley Tom Law	Local democracy – an overview, the role of civil society organisations, building a mandate

## Afternoon Workshop Sessions (internal focus)

Title	Facilitators	Details
Understanding the law	Jim Candiliotis Bill Bevan	Local Government Act, LGOIMA and OIA, accessing legal advice
Organisational governance and management	Pat Hanley Richard Murcott	Legal structures, growing the organisation, case study of Thorndon Residents' Association
Future issues for residents' associations	Hon. Peter Dunne David Robinson	The 'Super City' concept, closer Council collaboration, regional community objectives

# Workshop A Report

“Engaging with your Council”

Roger Tweedy (International Association for Public Participation)

Mike MacLeod (Draco Foundation)

The remit: “that an independent panel made up equally of community and Council representatives is formed to investigate how to improve relationships between local government and communities”, was discussed in outline at the commencement of the workshop. The group subdivided with one facilitator for each sub-group. A robust and worthwhile discussion ensued.

A ‘round table’ of the groups to ascertain some examples of positive experiences of engagement with councils revealed two examples.

In the first a wall had been built on some council land by a landowner on some adjacent land and this was causing a restriction of view to some residents nearby. Her residents’ association (RA) took the issue to council after liaising with the local residents affected. Council duly organised a site meeting with the elected member for the area, council officers, the RA and the landowner. The outcome of this was that the person responsible for constructing the wall had to lower it. This was a good outcome and a good example of RA intervention with council together with positive response from council. Some of the group felt that the council should simply have had the wall removed.

The second – related to the wind turbine debate – described how an RA had positively engaged with council, effectively changing its action on some aspects of the issue. This had been achieved through the careful accumulation of quality evidence, photographs and artists impressions together with a tightly argued legal case that focused on Council’s planning responsibilities and obligations. The group felt this was a good example in the sense of sheer success but also illustrated the uneven nature of the fight: this group was only able to mount an effective challenge because of the resources of its members who could afford the necessary professional assistance. Many RA’s as we know, can’t.

The group was asked to identify some ‘horror stories’ of their experiences of engagement.

- One person related how his RA had had letters completely ignored on numerous occasions to such a degree that members became disenchanted and left.
- Another explained how he tried to find out about some planning consents business and when it was to be discussed. It was not clear from the Council website so he asked officials and they refused to tell him advising him to, “watch the agenda”. He sought advice from his local Councillor and she too was prevented from accessing the information!
- One RA was particularly concerned with the ‘spin’ the Wellington City Council (WCC) puts on stories. He cited a front page report trumpeting ‘Low Rates – only a 2.88% rise’, in a huge headline. Three pages into the detail in a tiny font lay the real story: actual rates rises to be 5.5%.

The groups focussed on how to be effective in engaging with councils and the following advice emerged:

- Its all about relationships – get in there, talk to people, invite them to your meetings, get to know them, officers and elected members;
- Be assertive – don’t take no for an answer;
- Get to know who is who and what they do;
- Use the media – they are always interested in stories and your one is interesting so don’t fall into the trap of thinking its not;

- Get copies of oral presentations as well as background documents since officers often reveal more in these than in papers;
- Network with your neighbouring RA – you may have some common interests – you will certainly be able to share knowledge/information;
- Always try your best to get good evidence and present it well;
- Get to know the Local Government Act (LGA) and Resource Management Act (RMA). It may be tedious but pays dividends and remember: many officers and councillors are not familiar with it;
- Who is the expert in your community – you;
- Council's personnel turnover is high, generally RA's turnover is low – this gives RA's the upper hand in knowledge and history so use this to your advantage;
- Early engagement – communities should be invited in at the concept stage (so communities have a contribution at all stages). Engagement doesn't mean "the floodgates will open" (communities wanting more);
- Managerialism has increased – we are seeing more technical /'expert' solutions but are they ignoring other perspectives in the process?;
- A strong message was that there is a great deal of knowledge in communities; they need to be invited to contribute;
- There was particular interest of 'institutional knowledge' - with high Council officer turnover, local authorities need to better use the community's resources.
- There seems to be an issue around Wellington City Council's use of non-notifiable consents (versus the public interest).

#### **Recommendation:**

- 1) That an independent panel made up equally of community and Council representatives be formed to investigate how to improve relationships between local government and communities.

**Mike MacLeod**  
Strategic Planning Development Manager  
Council Watch (Draco Foundation)  
April 2010

**Roger Tweedy**  
Regional Coordinator  
International Assn. for Public Participation  
April 2010

# Workshop B Report

## “Working Alongside Community”

Jarrold Coburn (Council Watch/National Residents’ association Database)

This workshop could have benefited from more time – two or three weeks would have done it! There was an enormous hunger amongst the delegates for answers to the question “How do I engage with my residents more effectively?”.

The structure of the workshop saw an initial discussion on the conference remit “That a programme of promotional activity be developed, highlighting the function and importance of residents’ associations and supported by government or the private sector.” With that thought firmly in mind the group of around 30 people split into two to share and discuss ways they had worked alongside their respective communities.

The discussion was very positive and the attitude of delegates toward their peers was respectful, helpful and professional. Many tried and true methodologies were related, including the various ways to communicate via newsletter, use of modern technology, advertising, word-of-mouth and utilising the media.

There are two key learnings that emerged from the workshop:

- There are a broad range of experiences across residents’ associations ranging from wisdom gleaned from trial and error, to knowledge gained through professional or academic endeavour, and;
- Residents’ associations use a wide variety of mediums and methodologies to engage with their constituent residents, but these are limited in scope mostly to communication. The workshop attendees showed a high awareness and experience of communication techniques, but there was little mention of ‘engagement’ *per se*.

There was no doubt that residents’ associations would benefit from external promotional activities, with the proviso that this would not affect the way they undertook their business: in other words developing and promoting a universal identity of “residents’ association” would need to provide generic support, accessible by all skill and experience levels of group, with no negative implications for those who chose not to participate.

### Recommendation:

- 1) That a programme of promotional activity be developed, highlighting how individuals can engage with their community, and the function- and importance of residents’ associations; supported by local authorities and the private- and community sectors.

**Jarrold Coburn**

Trustee

Draco Foundation

April 2010

# Workshop C Report

“Organisational Governance and Strategy”

Bill Bevan (Whitireia Community Law Centre)

Jim Candiliotis (Federation of Wellington Progressive and Residents' associations)

This workshop empowered people from residents' associations by giving them an insight into the law as it relates to local government. The workshop was divided into two parts: Bill Bevan, Manager of the Whitireia Community Law Centre, spoke about the law in general and how residents' associations could access legal advice.

Jim Candiliotis spoke on specific areas of the law, in particular the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) and the Local Government Act. He explained some important aspects of LGOIMA, such as:

- All information 'held' is automatically available to the public, unless certain good reasons are provided;
- Councils have 20 working days to provide a response to a request;
- Requests do not have to be official, in fact any request for information from a council should be considered - by the council - as a LGOIMA request.
- If a Council does not abide by the law then there is recourse through the Office of the Ombudsmen.

Regarding the Local Government Act Jim had this to say:

- The principle of the Act is to provide good stewardship of public money with openness and transparency;
- Some Council officers do not appear to understand the letter nor spirit of the law;
- The only way a Council can be held legally accountable is via a judicial review;
- Councillors have very little power in a Council, most of the authority is devolved to the Chief Executive Officer.

Bill Bevan added that there were a number of good resources online at the Community Law Centre website. They are free to download.

## Recommendation:

- 1) That a strategy be developed to deliver an education programme for residents' association committee members, to improve our ability to access- and knowledge of the law and associated processes.

**Jim Candiliotis**

Chairperson

FWPRA

April 2010

# Workshop D Report

“Building stronger local democracy”

Pat Hanley (Social and Civic Policy Institute)

Tom Law (Federation of Wellington Progressive and Residents’ associations)

The question was raised as to whether representative democracy has outlived its usefulness. With all the electronic communications now available couldn’t we build a more participatory democracy?

It was also suggested that decision making processes put “the cart before the horse”: before the community is consulted the decision is already solidifying around the recommendations made by officers. There is not enough time and the community can be bamboozled by information but there is no genuine two-way debate. The debate should occur first around the “problem definition”: what’s broken and what are some of the ways of fixing it?

There was a need for communities to have access to better information in a timely fashion, using IT to support participation, interactive web sites, email, street meetings, petitions, community surveys, newsletters and local plans, participating in local events.

Elected officials were seen to be unaccountable.

Submissions were not valued. Lack of feedback on what happened as the result of submissions, what changed?

Councils were seen as too officer driven. Delegates felt Council officers should be more engaged with the communities they serve.

There was also concern that regional councils are even more remote from their communities. There is a need for more discussion between regional councils and communities on the “big picture”. Regional councils should recognise residents’ associations as resources to assist them in making better decisions.

## Recommendations:

- 1) That Councils and residents’ associations respect and trust the ability of citizens to be involved in decision-making, and this would be enhanced by better technologies leading to better decision-making. Trust the people.
- 2) That a resource kit be developed for residents’ associations to include content such as: making submissions, Council processes, developing business cases, and examples of successful engagement with communities.

**Pat Hanley**

Chair

Social and Civic Policy Institute

April 2010

# Workshop E Report

## “Organisational Governance and Strategy”

Pat Hanley (Social and Civic Policy Institute)

Richard Murcott (Thorndon Residents' association)

Thorndon Residents' association (TRA) opened this workshop by describing how they came to be established in 2008. The beginnings were conversations between parents regarding a lack of play areas in this inner Wellington suburb. From there other issues were identified and there was seen to be a need for a residents' association to deal with issues in an ongoing way.

One of the key messages from the TRA was that as the community saw things being achieved they felt more empowered as a committee and as a community.

While a new association, the structure of the TRA is very common to other associations. They have two Co-Chairs (many felt was hard to get someone to take the sole responsibility Chair), a Secretary, Treasurer, and committees and subcommittees around various issues and tasks.

The TRA use a range of techniques to build their relationships with the community and their mandate including: Survey Monkey, email lists, etc. A current issue around residential heritage status has evoked the use of a “world café” (single issue meeting of 30-40 people over 3 weeks) meeting carried out in partnership with the Wellington City Council (WCC).

Whilst residents' associations blossom in a crisis, having them there provides continuity so that when a crisis does occur residents don't have to start from scratch. Residents' associations can also be proactive rather than just responding to WCC. They can also deal with other government agencies. They can identify champions on issues. Having a formal legal structure is important where there is the potential threat of being sued. Difficulty finding the expert research and the money to take cases to the Environment Court.

There is potential for residents' associations to network on single issues, i.e. heritage, transport and to pool resources.

There was support for an annual conference and a task force to advance issues identified. Delegates also saw the need for a clearinghouse for ideas and resources.

### **Recommendation:**

- 1) That a strategy be developed to deliver an education programme for residents' association committee members, to improve our ability to access- and knowledge of the law and associated processes.

**Pat Hanley**

Chair

Social and Civic Policy Institute

April 2010



## Workshop F Report

“Future Issues for Residents’ Associations”

David Robinson (Social and Civic Policy Institute)

Hon. Peter Dunne (Member of Parliament for Ohariu)

**David Robinson, SCPI (in the chair):** introduction to the issues to be discussed and clarification of the role of SCPI, New Zealand Social and Civic Policy Institute, which is a community based not-for-profit research and policy organisation [www.scpi.org.nz](http://www.scpi.org.nz)

**Hon. Peter Dunne, Member for Ohariu:** stressed he represented his electorate and was not there as a minister or a party leader. Auckland consisted of 27 local authorities in the 1980s and the move toward the “super-city” was a second stage of reductions. If Auckland achieves this, it will affect the whole country. Councils in the Wellington region will be asked if amalgamation is the best form of organisation. So where is the public input? What is the provision for public input? There is a parliamentary submission process, which is minimal.

As things become more pressing, how can we activate the public response (citing example of the 27-acre car yard at Grenada Village, which was brought to attention by the community association). Priorities and decisions differ between WCC and Wellington Regional Council (WRC). If it were not for the community association in Grenada, the car yard would be a done deal. How do we ensure communities have a say?

In Auckland, there will be no direct community involvement with a super-city: a Mayor will be elected but issues raised by Residents’ associations will go through Local Boards. But is this effective?

Auckland lacks a regional association of Residents’ associations. A meeting has been called on 28 April in Auckland to form an Auckland Community Development Alliance. However, community groups have wasted a year in opposing the government, rather than aligning together to clarify and put forward their own priorities and preferred options.

**Cr. Chris Laidlaw:** In Wellington there have been discussions about amalgamation at two levels: the Mayoral Forum, and the CEOs of the councils. But there has been no public disclosure or community input around the region. People said they knew what they liked but there were no coordinated responses. He would like to see a contact group with public feedback.

**Cr. Celia Wade-Brown:** advocates early engagement within the Mayoral Forum. We should push for the issues to be discussed. Where does civil society and formal democracy interact?

**Rosamund Averton, Mt Victoria Residents’ Association:** we are talking about changing the governance and we must seriously examine it. The Local Government Act does not empower local representatives to represent local people.

**Cr. Pat Christenson:** Auckland had to amalgamate, because it does not work. Wellington does not have these problems: it is a different kettle of fish. There are local associations leading their communities so they can offer a response to mayoral forums.

*David Robinson presented the remit proposed by the Residents 2010 planning group:*

That a “Citizens Forum” be established, consisting of all residents’ associations in the Wellington region, to consider the implications of a super city.”

**David Robinson:** Currently there are differing views around the region about the desirability of some form of amalgamation. For example, some people in Porirua might want amalgamation, because some health

issues, etc., can be better dealt with regionally. Our concern is how communities can collectively put their views forward. We can either engage with the Mayoral Forum or set up an organisation to respond to it.

**Hon. Peter Dunne:** Central government decided to intervene in Auckland because it was ungovernable. With the Transmission Gully debate, what's the view of Wellington (as a group)? If Wellington lacks agreement, why should central government be involved? There must be a local consensus before central government gets involved. We cannot wait till government intervenes.

**Jim Baltaxe, Island Bay:** a citizens' forum is not the equivalent of a grouping of residents' associations. What we need is an ongoing process of the exchange of ideas. These conferences happen too infrequently. He advocates electronic media or a forum till a kernel of truth emerges.

**John Third, Ohariu Preservation Society:** the proposed remit is not what we want, as it is reactive to an anachronistic system. We are now in an information society. The power lies with individuals. The representative model is outmoded. We have unelected officers making decisions.

**Marie Thompson, NPPA:** consultations are disheartening if councils will do what they want anyway. We need to talk together, not be talked down to.

**David Robinson:** we need to pick up the olive branches offered by Councillors such as Chris Laidlaw and Celia Wade-Brown and engage with them at the same time as we continue to develop our community based views.

**Steve Russell, Makara Guardians:** there is a strong community already. A Yahoo! Group exists. Advocates electronic forum. A citizens' referendum does not get a resolution.

**Stan Andis, Strathmore Park:** there is a silent majority which does not use computers, and they must be consulted.

**Delwyn Randall, Lowry Bay:** if a group was set up, it must have access to accurate financial information. We must know what will happen to our rates.

**David Robinson:** SCPI would be working with the other conference organisers regional to collect and analyse information on the situation in the Wellington region and also to link up with community developments in Auckland.

**Hon. Peter Dunne:** the remit from the workshop goes to the full meeting for approval.

**Rosamund Averton:** a citizens' forum is not to be a collective of RAs, but of citizens.

**David Robinson:** let's collectively provide a space so people can talk and be prepared for any potential amalgamation.

*The original remit was discussed in some detail and several amendments were proposed and discussed. The workshop agreed that the following final version should be put to the full meeting.*

#### **Recommendation:**

- 1) That the Wellington regional residents' associations facilitate a citizens' forum consisting of all interested citizens in the Wellington Region to enable their voices to be heard on issues of concern including the implications of the amalgamations of Councils.

**David Robinson**

Social and Civic Policy Institute

April 2010

(notes taken by Jack Yan)

# Conference Surveys

## BACKGROUND

As part of the conference delegates from residents' associations were given two surveys to complete: one before; one after the conference. This document outlines the result of this survey. Delegates from residents' associations were asked to complete the first survey on arrival and the second survey at the end of the day. The survey was completed- and collected anonymously.

Questions were composed to be specific and unambiguous, whilst at the same time retaining a high degree of neutrality. Overall each survey was designed to be completed quickly (in less than one minute).

## FINDINGS

Delegates indicated seven areas of interest in their involvement in the conference: gaining knowledge, networking, getting bigger-picture view, affirmation, making a contribution, gaining clarity (especially around local government processes) and intellectual stimulation.

Nearly one tenth of delegates felt the conference validated or affirmed their involvement in a residents' association.

Seven questions in total were asked regarding the level of engagement residents' associations executive members have with local government agencies.

Delegates were asked directly how high the level of engagement is between their group and their city/district- and regional councils.

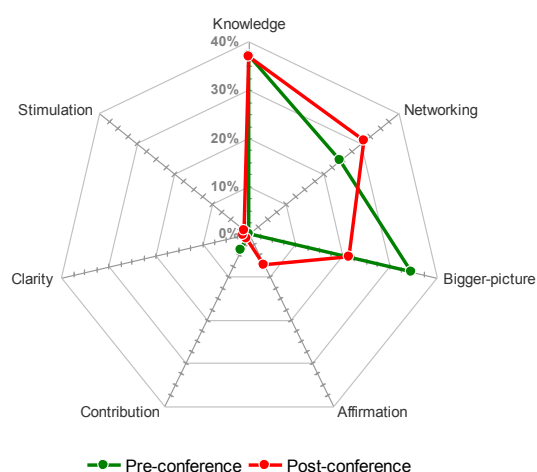
The results show residents' associations have a very poor level of engagement with their regional council (2.1), whilst having a fairly high level of engagement with their city/district council (3.6).

Delegates were asked to indicate the number of meetings they have had with councils in the past year. On average, delegates had 5 meetings with city/district councils and 1 with regional councils.

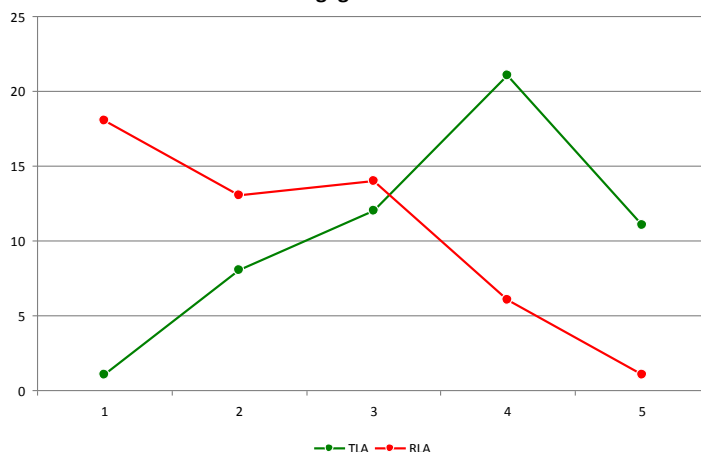
Delegate's organisations had made an average of 5 official submissions to a local authority in the past year. 74% of delegates indicated they would attend council meetings in the future, 20% indicated no and 6% did not answer the question.

Those surveyed were given the chance to suggest ways for local government to improve their level of engagement with community. The responses fell into seven major categories: listening, open-mindedness, speed of consultation, transparency, communication, respect and engagement (fig.3).

What delegates sought/received at conference n=54



Level of engagement: TLA vs RLA n=54

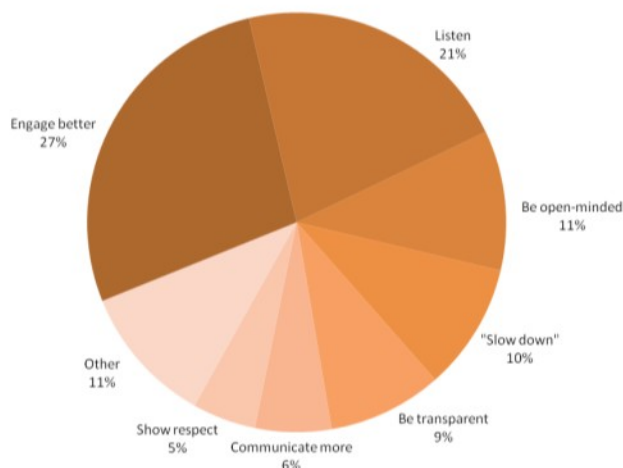


The majority of the comments focused on either councils engaging with- or listening to the community. Delegates also were keen to see councils “slow down” their processes and be more open-minded.

The majority of those surveyed were very positive about their role in their organisation and felt strongly that residents’ associations were an important part of society in New Zealand. Many agreed that residents’ associations were essential to community, and that their organisations were highly effective. The average monthly time commitment was 14 hours.

Those surveyed were asked to state the one thing that their organisation had achieved, that they were most proud of. Most volunteered an activity that was in keeping with helping build ownership of local governance or a local resource and a similar number cited actions that overturned an intended activity or policy by a local- or central government agency, that was opposed by the community.

How Councils could improve relationships with community n=102



Activity	%age
Helping community to be self-governing	25%
Protecting a local resource	19%
Civil society activity (opposing State activities)	16%
Actively developing community resources	14%
Promoting local democracy	14%
Contributing to a sense of place	8%
Organising community events	4%

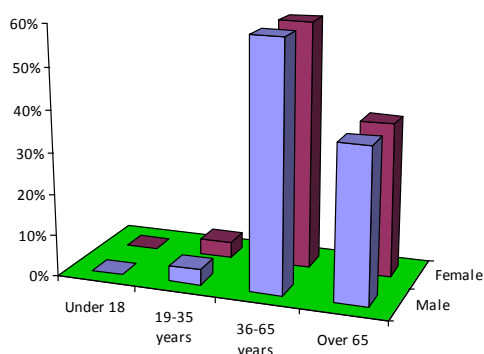
The delegates rated the connection of their residents’ association to the community they served fairly high although the relationship with other residents’ associations was not as good. A majority of respondents indicated they had regular contact with other residents’ associations. and slightly fewer said they had worked on shared issues or projects with other residents’ associations in the past year.

However almost all indicated they would keep in touch with other residents’ associations in the future.

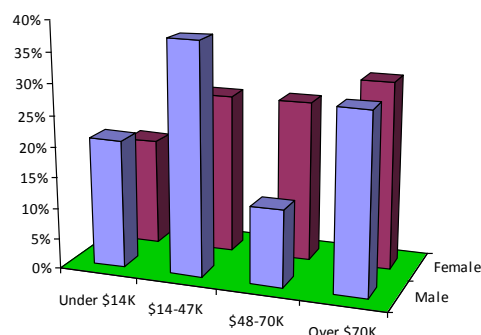
It is noteworthy that the activities that respondents were most-proud of were community-based and focused on protecting or promoting resources or freedoms for the residents, as opposed to a small number that fell into the category of ‘fighting’ the Council or the State. This a key finding of this research and must not be overlooked.

This year there are a number of high-profile issues that bring heightened importance to the local government elections. With this in mind it is reassuring that 96% of respondents said they would encourage voting in this year’s election while 94% indicated they voted last election.

Age range of delegates n=54



Income range of delegates n=47



Three demographic indicators were sought from delegates: age range, income bracket, and gender. The respondents were divided male and female exactly 50%.

The age range of both male and female delegates were exactly the same, showing not only an equal gender distribution but also a level of sexual equality across the age ranges. The majority of delegates were aged between 36 and 65. More female delegates were found to earn a higher wage than male delegates.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a popular perception that residents' associations are made up of crusty old retired army officers. This is certainly not the case! There was an exact split between the genders in our sample, and the age range was also equal amongst male and female respondents. The men tended to pool in the lower-mid income bracket while there were more females represented in the mid-upper bracket. Both genders were equally represented in the very low and very high income ranges.

Residents' association committee members are active in politics a majority voted in the last local body election and even more intend to encourage members of their community to vote this year. They spend on average 14 hours per month on residents' association business; they're highly passionate about their role in the community and most regard their organisation as very effective. Most rated residents' associations as very important to New Zealand society and an essential part of a community.

Whilst the level of engagement between residents' associations and TLAs was relatively high, the relationship with regional councils was very low. This was supported by the number of 1 regional council meeting attended by the respondents in the past year versus 5 with city/district councils. Nearly three-quarters of respondents indicating that they would attend a council meeting in the future.

It is apparent that work needs to be done to improve these relationships as both regional councils and residents' associations hold knowledge and networks that are vital to the other's ability to conduct their business effectively and productively.

Delegates had a number of positive suggestions on how to improve the relationship between local government and the communities they serve. Only a relatively small percentage of organisational activities that respondents were "most proud of" involved opposing State actions. This is not in keeping with the 'traditional' view of what a residents' association does: particularly from some councils' viewpoints. Further research into this area would benefit both the local government sector and the wider community.

The relationship between residents' associations with the communities they serve could be better. The intra-association relationships need work though over half of the respondents indicated they have had some contact with other groups on a fairly regular basis and have worked in a collaborative manner in the past.

The surveys showed the delegates came to the conference seeking networking opportunities and a view of the 'bigger picture' amongst other things, and walked away valuing those networks that they had formed on the day. A high percentage indicated they would be keeping in touch with other residents' association in the future, indicating a recognition of the importance of retaining those networks.

The delegates made a number of suggestions for Council and those that reflect a need of residents' association are summarised here. Those needs reflect what could happen to improve the relationship between local government and residents' associations, and what could be done to help residents' associations become more effective:

Residents' association	Shared	Local Authority
Improved participation in the business of councils	A better understanding by individuals about their rights regarding local government	Local authorities be more open, informative and active in communicating information
	A better understanding of the pressures Councils are under	Higher level of involvement at local level by ward Councillors
	More needs to be done at the local level to encourage voting	Council information needs to be easier to understand by the community
	Greater levels of respect in dealings between councils and residents' associations	Residents' associations need to be included in discussions on strategic issues
	Residents' associations need more time to engage with their communities on the big issues	

## Future Action

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The conference delegates voted and agreed by a majority to the following recommendations. It is important to note that some delegates abstained from voting on certain recommendation, and a few voted against some. However as the majority were in agreement these recommendations are mandated by the conference.

**Recommendation One:** That an independent panel made up equally of community and Council representatives be formed to investigate how to improve relationships between local government and communities.

**Recommendation Two:** That a programme of promotional activity be developed, highlighting how individuals can engage with their community, and the function- and importance of residents' associations; supported by local authorities and the private- and community sectors.

**Recommendation Three:** That Councils and residents' associations respect and trust the ability of citizens to be involved in decision-making, and this would be enhanced by better technologies leading to better decision-making. Trust the people.

**Recommendation Four:** That a resource kit be developed for residents' associations to include content such as: making submissions, Council processes, developing business cases, and examples of successful engagement with communities.

**Recommendation Five:** That a strategy be developed to deliver an education programme for residents' association committee members, to improve our ability to access- and knowledge of the law and associated processes.

**Recommendation Six:** That a group of interested people convene to consider- and report back a strategy to provide support and coordination for residents' associations that is web-based and focuses on specific issues.

**Recommendation Seven:** That the Wellington regional residents' associations facilitate a citizens' forum consisting of all interested citizens in the Wellington Region to enable their voices to be heard on issues of concern including the implications of the amalgamations of Councils.

As a result of the conference a Task Group has been established by the organising committee. This comprises of the Federation of Wellington Progressive and Residents' associations, Social and Civic Policy Institute, Draco Foundation (NZ) Charitable Trust, International Association of Public Participation, and Ohariu MP Hon. Peter Dunne.

This group does not speak on behalf of residents' associations, it has been formed with the sole purpose of executing the recommendations from the conference in a way that will be acceptable to residents' associations and sustainable into the future. Nor is the Task Group exclusive. Any residents' association

has a right to attend the meetings and call themselves a part of the group (see contact details below). Other organisations or individuals may become a part of the group by invitation.

At the time of writing the Task Group had met twice to consider each recommendation and formulate a way forward. The decisions of the Task Group are:

	Action	Responsible
One	A working group will be formed to develop a terms of reference for a National Panel on Community and Local Government Relations. Suggested members: IAP2, Draco Foundation, SCPI, LGNZ, representatives of a North- and South Island residents' association.	David ROBINSON
Two	The Draco Foundation will continue its current in-house programme of resource development with support from SCPI and report back on progress on a regular basis.	Mike MACLEOD
Three	Noted by the Task Group.	n/a
Four	As per Recommendation Two.	Mike MACLEOD
Five	Task Group will revisit this recommendation at a later stage, once resources have been developed. Future approaches to this recommendation could include working with Office of the Ombudsmen, Citizen Advice Bureaux, Community Law Centres and Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector.	Refer back to Task Group.
Six	The formation of the Task Group and ongoing activity by the Task Group members is addressing this recommendation.	n/a
Seven	FWPRA will lead the formation of a citizens forum (group) to work collaboratively with other third-sector and governmental agencies with the support of the Task Group.	Tom LAW



## Contact Details - Residents2010 Task Group

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# Acknowledgements

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Thanks go to the supporters and sponsors of the Residents2010 Conference:



**Federation of Wellington Progressive and Residents' associations**  
[www.residents.org.nz/fwpra](http://www.residents.org.nz/fwpra)



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[www.scipi.co.nz](http://www.scipi.co.nz)



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**Office of the Speaker**  
**Hon. Peter Dunne, MP for Ohariu**

**Mr. John Watson**  
Titahi Bay Residents' Association

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

**Jarrod Coburn** is a trustee of the Draco Foundation (NZ) Charitable Trust, a non-governmental organisation that operates nationwide to strengthen communities through building good local governance structures. He is the past Executive Director of the New Zealand Resilience Trust and a former Senior Advisor with Wellington City Council. Jarrod has spoken internationally and domestically on the subject of community resilience, volunteering and emergency management. Jarrod is completing his Master of Management Studies degree fulltime at Victoria University of Wellington. His thesis focuses on residents' associations from organisational, academic, political and internal perspectives.

**Mike MacLeod** is a management consultant who specialises in the local government sector. Originally from England, he is the former general manager of Wairoa Health Services and has worked for both Gisborne District Council and Wellington City Council. Mike is the Secretary of the Draco Foundation (NZ) Charitable Trust, the organisation that operates Council Watch and the New Zealand National Residents' association Database. His role with Council Watch involves developing community outreach and education programmes and building relationships with funders.