

Local Government New Zealand Conference 2016

This year's conference was held in Dunedin and had the theme of "creating places where people love to live, work, and play."

Key plans or discussion documents launched

The 2050 Challenge

This discussion document was developed by LGNZ after the need for the sector to identify and respond to future shifts was raised by the Young Elected Members group at last year's conference. The document identifies five key shifts that are affecting local communities and invites feedback by 23 September 2016. The five shifts are: Urbanisation, liveable cities, and changing demographics; Stewardship of our natural environment; Responding to climate change; The future of work; and Equality and social cohesion



Planning our future

This is the outcome of LGNZ's first principles review of environmental management. Its diverse panel looked at what a 'fit for purpose' resource management regime would look like.

It came up with four themes: Increasing resource scarcity and competition for access; A need for a better understanding of our resources; A higher importance on resilience is needed in decision making; and that there's a current lack of alignment, and certainty takes too long.

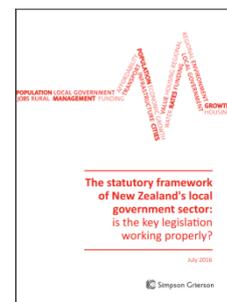


It also developed an eight point programme for creating a future-focused resource management system:

1. Introducing regional spatial planning with statutory influence
2. Create special economic zones with tailored regulation, and funding structures
3. Developing pathways for government to play an active partner role in local projects of national significance
4. Developing a multi-dimensional evaluation framework
5. Introducing standard tools and methods for assessing costs and benefits
6. Prioritising investment in understanding the current state and trends of resources
7. A two-tier system for resource management decision making
8. Sharing the benefits from the use of common assets

The statutory framework of New Zealand's local government sector

This commissioned report looked at the relationships between the Local Government Act, The Resource Management Act, and the Land Transport Act. This work compliments the planning our future planning and had five key findings: the system is not broken, just worse for wear; the three statutes were originally well aligned; amendments have eroded the alignment; there has been a focus on economic efficiency at the expense of local democracy; recent legislative change has been hasty; and better outcomes would be achieved through less haste a more coherence.



Key messages from the conference

1. There are a range of international and local trends that local government needs to adapt to.

In line with the 2050 Challenge discussion document launch there were a number of speakers which focussed on the international megatrends and their potential impacts on New Zealand and local government. These included Greg Doone (Tomorrow's places: our communities in 2050), Troy Pickard (An international perspective on "Tomorrow's places") and Jeb Brugmann (Building resilient places). Key messages are that building resilience into systems is essential to prepare for change, but that this resilience can also create other benefits for councils and their communities.

2. The tool box for local government is a big one, and there are a range of options with benefits and costs.

Given the range of roles local government have from regulator to advocate to leader, there are a range of tools outside the traditional approaches which exist for councils to achieve outcomes. Emphasis was put on the potential role for incentives, or community empowerment to address traditional problems in new ways.

Key speakers here were Jason Krupp (using incentives to strengthen economies and performance), Jeb Brugmann (Building resilient places) and Greg Doone (Tomorrow's places: our communities in 2050).

3. Partnership and collaboration is not optional for local government.

This theme was pitched in the backdrop of reorganisation in the local government sector by central government and the need to become more flexible in the face of greater uncertainty.

This message was particularly emphasised by the panel discussion with representatives from the Waikato and Canterbury (Collaboration and organisation: a regional approach to place making), Troy Pickard (An international perspective on "Tomorrow's places"), Minister Sam Lotu-liga, and Tā Mark Solomon (the role of partnerships in strengthening our communities).

4. The role of community is important, and place shaping is a key role of local government.

The transformative role that local government can have in its community was emphasised, particularly when it focuses in place making at a community level.

This was picked up by most speakers in some way, but particularly Peter Kageyama (Engaging our communities and telling our stories) and Tā Mark Solomon (the role of partnerships in strengthening our communities).