

Report on the Chair's attendance at Local Government NZ Conference 2018

Whau Local Board representative – T Mulholland

Date: 15-17 July 2018

Summary

As Chair and representative of the Whau Local Board, I attended the LGNZ Conference 2018. There were approximately 550+ local government staff and elected representatives to discuss the future of local government in Aotearoa New Zealand. Attending from Auckland Council were the CEO, some senior management team members and other elected members.

During the conference I also attended the LGNZ AGM which included 13 policy remits focused on infrastructure and funding, waste minimisation, climate change, the environment and a range of social issues. LGNZ represents all 78 councils in New Zealand and the organisation is now tasked with promoting these remits to central government, business leaders and community groups.

Conference proceedings

Of particular importance for our residents was the Minister of Finance Grant Robertson's announcement of an inquiry into local government funding. Whilst this has an effect on the whole of Tamaki Makarau being dominantly reliant on property rates to fund services and infrastructure, there are changes and benefits to the new rating and targeted rating system for Auckland. This may have a local impact as boards are constantly competing for improved infrastructure, parks, green spaces and other local service needs. If the Minister is supportive of change, there may be future trickle down benefits to the Whau.

We are faced with many challenges in local boards, much work that is or has been undertaken in the past by central government or at a regional level are now being implemented at the local level, hence costs and challenges associated such as: addressing climate change, more frequent extreme weather events, and the impact of increasing tourism on communities. The Minister has tasked the Productivity Commission to look at new ways Councils like ours can fund existing and new infrastructure, we await their recommendations.

Taking greater control over funding and the direction of local government was a strong theme .. Instead of relying on central government to decide what's good for our communities, LGNZ President Dave Cull suggested councils and communities need to make these decisions. I agree.

It is those living and working in our communities who best understand the issues facing them and, very often, how to solve them. I will in the future, be participating in this discussion for our board and community.

Each year, LGNZ sponsor the EXCELLENCE Awards. This year there were six award categories. It is good to see the approach and representation across Aotearoa and how excellence in our work can improve the lives of our community.

The programme included some informative speakers such as the topic of harnessing localism and empowering communities to succeed. Also of great interest and inspiration to assist betterment in our role in the future, was the address by Hon Nanaia Mahuta. Hon Mahuta's speech was inspiring, there was a connect and understanding of the role we have in the community, the need for central government to listen to our concerns, ways of working and collaboration between central and local government to improve the lives of people of Aotearoa.

Special consideration

Attendance at the conference has had a benefit to the people of the Whau and our role in LGNZ as there were many connections and relationships developed. One of those being the relationship with people involved in the LGNZ Zone 1. The people attending were positive and generally in agreement on ways of working to improve relationships and foster a bright future for community.

Lessons learnt included ways that other elected members work, their priorities, how they undertake projects and work programmes in their geographical areas.

Other benefits included the learning of how we work with LGNZ, influencers and decision making.

Chair, Tracy Mulholland

August 2018