

<http://akina.org.nz/news/big-businesses-sign-big-change-social-procurement-programme/>

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Big businesses sign-up to big change through social procurement programme

Twelve of New Zealand's leading public and private sector organisations Air New Zealand, ANZ Bank NZ, Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, Fonterra, Hamilton City Council, Inland Revenue, McConnell Dowell, New Zealand Post, Russell McVeagh, SAP and Waikato Regional Council have joined forces to harness the potential of social procurement.

The organisations have signed on as founding members of the country's first social procurement buyer group established by the Ākina Foundation as part of the Fwd: social procurement programme.

Social procurement involves businesses tapping into their supply chains to unlock positive benefits. They do this by purchasing from organisations like social enterprises, which trade to generate positive social and environmental impact.

Ākina is working closely with the buyer group foundation members to understand their aspirations and needs, and to support them to embed social procurement into their organisations. Social procurement lead at Ākina, Dr Seán Barnes, says the buyer group members represent a shift in procurement practice where changing attitudes are leading to changing behaviours.

“The collective approach to change is really exciting and really strong” says Dr Barnes “This group of buyers alone represents a total spending power of more than \$27 billion annually. Even a small amount of this spend directed to social enterprises will result in significant positive flow-on effects through the impact that those enterprises deliver”.

Through the Fwd: social procurement platform the buyer group is connecting with social enterprise suppliers that deliver impact over a range of areas including environmental restoration, waste reduction, workplace wellbeing and building strong resilient communities. The group will also undertake a number of collaborative activities to share learning, tools and experience, including workshops to deepen their understanding of impact.

Matthew Parsons from New Zealand Post agrees that there's huge potential to influence positive change through procurement “The Buyer Group provides an opportunity for like-minded procurement experts to collaborate for a greater purpose.” says Parsons.

“Procurement isn't just about the 'Five Rights' anymore, it's also about broader outcomes and making a real difference to society and the environment.” he says.

Air New Zealand Head of Procurement Alistair Prebble says the airline has an aspiration to be one of the most sustainable carriers in the world. Social procurement within the airline's vast supply chain provides a big opportunity to make a difference.

"Buying from organisations who share our values enables us to contribute environmentally, socially and economically which are key pillars of the sustainability framework we are committed to" says Prebble.

"We're excited by this opportunity to help boost social enterprise while making sound procurement decisions."

The Fwd: social procurement platform was first launched in November 2018 and currently consists of 44 products and services from 32 social enterprise suppliers, with more on the way. The platform was built in partnership between Ākina and New Zealand Post and was part-funded by the Social Enterprise Sector Development Programme, which was established to create the conditions to enable a flourishing social enterprise sector in New Zealand.

Dr Barnes says the buyer group is an important step in realising the power of social procurement as a way of addressing issues like climate change and inequality.

"Ultimately, this is about the role that business has to play in tackling some of the serious challenges we're facing today. We're going to need every tool at our disposal to make a difference for our people and our planet." says Dr Barnes.

"These are significant New Zealand businesses committing to procurement change. It's great leadership and sends a really powerful message."

About the Social Enterprise Sector Development Programme:

Social Enterprise Sector Development Programme, is a three year partnership between the Department of Internal Affairs on behalf the government, and the Ākina Foundation. It is supported in partnership with the Community Enterprise Network Trust (CENT). The programme aims to create the conditions for social enterprises to thrive, and inform the Government's ongoing contribution to the sector.

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