

Rt Hon. Prime Minister John Key
Parliament Buildings
Wellington
October 13th 2014

Dear Prime Minister

Congratulations on your successful third term election result.

This result provides the opportunity for the National-led Government to gain real traction on recent initiatives to enhance the wellbeing for all New Zealanders. We believe there are some key understandings that will support this. They are:

- all communities have significant capacity to contribute to their positive development. This not fully appreciated by government agencies and Central Government is not well placed to lead a process to release this capacity.
- small change on a wide scale has significant potential. This change is frequently invisible to the main systems or old way of doing things. This change is locally driven and can significantly increase the productivity and effectiveness of existing Government investments.
- new diverse models of organising and leadership are required to successfully tap this potential. This is a global trend and one that NZ is well position to be a global leader in. This will require smart investment and is more about Central Government doing less as opposed to Government doing more.

National List MP Alfred Ngaro is highly experienced in the approach outlined in this document and was part of establishing Inspiring Communities – an organisation dedicated utilising the skills and expertise within communities. He is a valuable resource in your Government.

This paper:

- provides details about us and our approach
- outlines current context and strategic opportunities.

We would value the opportunity to discuss this approach and how it can support this Governments agenda

Kind regards



David Hanna

National Manager, Inspiring Communities. (david.hanna@inspiringcommunities.org.nz)

CC. Ministers of Finance, State Services, Social Development, Education, Health, Internal Affairs, Justice, Police, Maori Development, Community and Voluntary Sector.

Inspiring Communities and our Approach

Inspiring Communities is a small national organisation that actively champions the capacity of communities to address core issues. We represent a network of 3000 supporters from multiple sectors, places and organisations who believe in the ability of communities to contribute to positive change.

Our approach is not a model or service - it is an approach based on five key principles:

1. A shared local vision.
2. Focus on utilising existing strengths and assets.
3. Many sectors and layers working together.
4. Building diverse and collaborative leadership.
5. Adaptive planning and action informed by outcome measures.

This approach is not a silver bullet but it is complementary to other Government initiatives and significantly enhances potential benefits. Other benefits include building social infrastructure and strengthening cohesive community relationships.

Community-led Development matters because:

- the current approach is achieving limited gains – the dominant Government model to address problems is focused on deficits and purchasing services to fix the problem. This approach can increase dependence on external resources as opposed to building existing capability.
- increasing integration and coordination between government agencies alone will not lead to achievement of Better Public Service Targets – local people and communities need to be more active in determining solutions.
- complex community issues are best addressed by the ‘whole system’ working together.
- there are un-tapped resources and assets (financial and non financial) within communities that can be better harnessed by working in locally-led ways.

Inspiring Communities believes that:

- ✓ a significant shift in thinking and action is needed to maximise the potential impact from locally-led activities.
- ✓ greater power sharing in problem identification and solutions is essential
- ✓ this approach is challenging – the distributed power model of this approach requires strong leadership to resist the old entrenched sector interests and to manage the times when it appears messy and confusing.

Inspiring Communities:

- connects communities and agencies with knowledge and experience
- provides training to grow skills and capability
- gathers and shares insights and data to strengthen practice-based evidence
- encourages system changes to maximise local wellbeing and wealth

Communities Leading Change – Current Context and Strategic Opportunity

New Zealand has a strong history of healthy community level action and is well placed to leverage off this expertise. Our small population size and high connectivity between people and groups are significant advantages.

In our seven years of operation, Inspiring Communities has learned that new ways of working are triggered by:

- responses to events and crises, such as the Global Financial Crisis, climate change, inequalities, resource constraints and the Canterbury earthquakes.
- new public policy agendas, such as localism, co-production, decentralisation, innovation and entrepreneurship, increasing inclusion.
- new governance arrangements, such as collaborative and networked governance, co-production, post settlement entities and arrangements, community governance and new deliberative technologies for enhancing citizen participation in decision making.
- new thinking / ideas, such as complexity and adaptive systems thinking, developmental evaluation, collective impact etc.

The evidence from community-led practice in this country is collaborative working by business, government and local communities can create effective responses to national challenges such as child poverty, violent crime, unemployment and educational underachievement. Examples of locally-led achievements are noted in the following table.

The community-led change processes do take time and can appear messy. Progress is usually non-linear and is seen in small steps rather than giant leaps and is best tracked via a broad range of indicators. It is important that both practice-based evidence and evidence based practice are valued equally.

There are a number of ways that central government can work more effectively and efficiently to enable communities to be their best. These involve moving beyond traditional 'build or buy' approaches to approaches that are more catalytic in nature:

- letting go of the total power in collaborative initiatives - being a participant but not a controller
- exchanges to share knowledge and ideas between sectors (government, community and business)
- supporting training to develop knowledge and skillsets
- recognition of community-led approaches and support for 'innovation' hubs for locally-led initiatives
- working with philanthropic funders and business to create a pipeline funding approach to better support locally-led solutions and action
- supporting more diverse monitoring frameworks to capture changes in social infrastructure and community outcomes

"Decentralising power isn't just right, it works. People on the ground know what's needed to improve their area and how to get value for money in achieving it. The Whitehall blueprint just can't match local knowledge."

David Cameron, UK Prime Minister 2013

Communities Face Complex Challenges

What's Changed:

What's Enabled Change:

<p>Small towns in decline</p> <p>Mataura</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's readiness for school increased from 20-80% in 3 years • Community events engaging 85% of local people • 65 families now fed from community garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • honest, open and transparent communication • a local task force that set priorities and championed strengths based action • new collaboration between residents and agencies/organisations
<p>Failing schools and disconnected communities</p> <p>Victory Village, Nelson</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School roll turn over has dropped from 65% to 10-15% • Student achievement and attendance levels have continued to increase • 90% involvement by families in 3-way learning conferences • 13 new resident-initiated activities catalysed in 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school philosophies of enrolling a family and 'everyone matters' • a community hub (co-located school-health-community facility) committed to being 'the first stop' & supporting local families • proactively supporting and enabling local residents' needs and dreams. • local people believing in their own capacity to better manage health and wellbeing
<p>Breaking poverty cycles</p> <p>Good Cents Porirua</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150+ low income individuals/families now experiencing a fundamental shift around their money and futures, and leading their own change and transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping those with debt own their situation and be their own change agents • professionals not problem solving for people • intentionally building relationships and having fun
<p>Transforming a local economy and community</p> <p>Opotiki</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated planning co-led by iwi and local Council to enable community transformation through economic and social development. • Regional partners co-investing locally \$25m in Opotiki Harbour development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nurturing collaborative cross-sector leadership around a common local vision • investing in relationships locally, regionally and nationally • persistence, patience & long term commitment:
<p>Creating neighbourhoods that care</p> <p>Tiaki ō Tātou Tamariki - Kaiti, Gisborne & Gonville, Whanganui</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Gonville - half the neighbourhood engaged in locally-run activities, with 1/3 putting their hands up to help organise them. • In Kaiti - 100% of residents say they enjoy living there (up from 67%), 31% reduction in local crime in last 3 years. • Reduced reliance on outside professionals being paid to support vulnerable families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobilising resident-led action and leadership • intentionally building social capital - trust and relationships in streets, which has catalysed local self help networks • accessing statutory agency data at street level