



Progressive thinking



ten perspectives:

Possible futures for public and community services

Dedication

To our members who work so hard to ensure everyone in our country can participate fully in society, and whose work ensures our communities can flourish and thrive.



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Foreword

*He aha te kai ō te rangatira?
He Kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero.
What is the food of the leader.
It is knowledge. It is communication.*



Glenn Barclay,
Kerry Davies, and
Erin Polaczuk
National secretaries of
the New Zealand Public
Service Association
Te Pūkenga Here
Tikanga Mahi

Our strong public and community services, funded collectively through our taxes, are essential in our fight against COVID-19.

2020 has provided urgent and unique challenges for public and community services. While many of our members are working at the frontline, working to keep our communities safe and supported through the pandemic, those of us who can dedicate time to advocacy have done so.

We decided to write this book on the eve of our first lockdown. We wanted to keep the wider PSA whānau connected while advocating for progressive, union-led change at a critical moment in our history. It has paid off. Through the webinar series, from which the ten chapters of this book are drawn, we spent 14 hours in conversation with more than 3000 members and supporters. These discussions brought together the wider union movement at a time when we all needed connection and support.

We want to start by thanking our contributors who have each thought deeply about possible futures for our community and public services, sharing their expertise and energy with us. In this book, and in conversation

with PSA members we tackled the big and complex issues those services, and we as a country, face.

As a collective our vision is clear: Public and community services are pivotal in how Aotearoa creates and meets its future. We are united in identifying that there are now opportunities for change and that we are well positioned to make that change.

This book is being launched on the cusp of the 2020 General Election. We hope its thinking will inspire members and leaders to influence and champion the change we need to see.

That's not to say we haven't seen progress. The recently passed Public Service Act is world leading. It defines the democratic role and the purpose of the Public Service as including supporting governments to pursue the long-term public interest and facilitate active citizenship.

Here, we seek to build on progress. Our contributors put the challenge to those of us working in, and shaping, public

Foreword



and community services, to transcend form and habit and work together as part of an integrated system designed around the people we serve.

The problems we are working together to solve, like inequality and climate change, can be messy and complex – but as our youngest contributor writes, they are not beyond us.

Resting on past achievements is not an option. Our health system might once have been the envy of the world, but how will it fare in the coming years? Our efforts in the face of obvious and persistent inequalities must be “how can we do even better”?

Whether we are wrestling with the right time to speak to the importance of climate action in our work (now), calling for a more active and dynamic government, or removing roadblocks to equal access and outcomes in health and wellbeing, each of us has a role to play in building more progressive public and community services.

The ideas in this book challenge and excite us and we hope they will act as a catalyst for action in your own areas of passion and focus. At the PSA we will certainly be thinking about what they mean for our movement.



It is worth noting that the views in this book are those of the contributors and the PSA has undertaken this work not to promote or endorse specific ideas or views but to spark a discussion. It is through debate and considering a range of views that PSA members and others can organise to do better.

Our contributors have put forward actions we can take, such as; supporting diverse teams and bottom-up innovation, championing transformative policy reform, and acknowledging and working to address inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19.

Change can be created where people and services meet. We want people working in public and community services to be empowered to humbly and proactively learn from the people we are serving to improve services and policy. Our institutions need to change so that this kind of human learning continuously improves both service design and policy.

Here in Aotearoa and across our union movement we value equality, compassion, and justice. The decisions we take now about public and community services can help deliver on these values and ensure that everyone is better off. ❖

“As a collective our vision is clear: We understand public and community services are pivotal in how Aotearoa creates and meets it's future.”



Learning and unlearning coronavirus lessons



Max Rashbrooke

Max is a Wellington-based writer with twin interests in economic inequality and democratic participation.

He is currently the 2020 J D Stout Fellow at Victoria University of Wellington. He is also the author of **Wealth and New Zealand**, and edited the best-selling work **Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis**

Anyone who thinks that the State's role will "inevitably" change post-coronavirus is probably wrong.

Government's reach into our lives has suddenly expanded, it is true. But this could easily be portrayed as negative, because authoritarian; or temporary, because unaffordable in the long term. So change will have to be fought for, and the exact shape of that change will need careful thought. Nonetheless, we can combine pre-existing ideas about the State's role with specific lessons from the crisis to create a vision for a more active, dynamic and resilient kind of government.

Even before coronavirus, alternative visions were emerging from the work of several thinkers. Oxford economist Kate Raworth's 'doughnut economics' suggests humanity needs to land in the safe space represented by the flesh of the doughnut, where human development is balanced with environmental protection. Undershooting into the hole of the doughnut would represent insufficient human development; overshooting into the space beyond it would represent environmental degradation.

This provides an overarching role for government in balancing these two core demands, because people acting by themselves – or in markets – will not get that balance right. Mass extinction of species, runaway climate change and widening

inequalities are all evidence of that. Coronavirus rams home that lesson: Its ultimate cause is our economically-driven incursions into the virgin rainforests where such diseases spread amongst animals. COVID-19 is a symbol of a world out of balance. Yet balancing competing demands has always been at the core of the State's role, ever since the early modern philosopher Thomas Hobbes suggested it was needed to stop "warre of every one against every one".

The human development that Raworth envisages can, in turn, be guided by philosopher Amartya Sen's vision of wellbeing, in which everyone has the resources for a flourishing existence and can lead lives "they have reason to value". New Zealand's 'wellbeing government' is so far just a skeleton, but it holds promise: pursuing holistic wellbeing, the whole wide range of things that humans truly need to flourish, gives governments far stronger grounds to act than, say, the simple pursuit of GDP.

Pursuing wellbeing for all also requires us to be attentive to inequality, something that coronavirus exposes – and could exacerbate. Without strong government action, economic crises will always hit the poor hardest,

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while the rich can escape relatively unhurt. Coronavirus reminds us of government's core role in redressing the inequalities left to us by luck and the market.

Only government action, in the form of taxes and other ways to share resources, can avert a return to Victorian-style imbalances of wealth. And the crisis has shown just how rapidly the State can act on inequality. It turns out that governments around the world can double benefits, can house the homeless, can build hospitals quickly. These actions aren't guaranteed to last: they can plausibly be dismissed as emergency measures by those who oppose active government. But their memory can be kept alive; we can argue that such measures should be adopted and extended. And if the state of the public finances is held up as an objection, we can argue for the slow and sensible paying down of debt – Britain only paid off the last of its World War II debts in 2006 – while funding social measures through taxes on wealthy households largely unscathed by the crisis.

How should the State pursue such goals? Confidently and dynamically, suggests Marianna Mazzucato, author of the groundbreaking 'The Entrepreneurial State' and one of the world's most sought-after economists. The initial breakthroughs behind new drugs,

Mazzucato shows, are often made in public laboratories; the 12 key technologies on which the smartphone relies were all developed or funded by the public sector. By picking important public "missions", like Germany's massive 1990s shift to renewable energy, governments can shape markets, create new ones, and do much of the patient work that underpins innovation. They are wealth creators.

Closer to home there are clear lessons for government post-coronavirus. Māori have, in declaring rāhui and manning checkpoints, exercised tino rangatiratanga in striking ways. But Mihingaarangi Forbes and others have noted that Māori have largely been recipients of the disaster response, not the drivers of it. "Once again," Forbes wrote, "the actions of the government have been more paternalistic than ... partnership." We will all have to support Māori in arguing for a future that holds more autonomy and less paternalism.

Central to the COVID-19 fight have been our frontline public sector workers, two-thirds of them women. Surely the calls for them to be better paid, and more adequately staffed, will now be much harder to resist. We have seen public services more generally, especially in health, perform wonders during this crisis. But we have also seen how badly stretched those services were – and

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Learning and unlearning coronavirus lessons

“The post-coronavirus vision is clear. We need government that is more active, more dynamic and more resilient.”

in some cases, how poorly prepared they were for the pandemic.

So we will need to make the case for a far more resilient state: one that is better funded and has more reserves of ‘fat’ – such as ICU beds that normally sit empty – to be called on in times of crisis. As well as being resilient, this kind of government would, in the words of Victoria University’s Jonathan Boston, be anticipatory, future-focussed. It would look ahead, scanning the horizon for creeping problems and hard-to-detect dangers, and prepare accordingly.

Not everything about this crisis will teach us the right lessons. The government’s response has been successful precisely because it was so authoritarian. But crises are the exception not the rule, and in general we will need to argue for more deeply democratic government, one

in which citizens are more directly involved in decision-making. This better answers the promise of democracy, which is that citizens should have a say over all the major decisions that affect them. It also delivers better policies, because they are more closely informed by the reality of individuals’ lives; it makes decisions feel more legitimate, since more people have genuinely participated in them; and it increases confidence in the whole system. In that sense, we will have to unlearn some of the lessons of coronavirus.

Still, the post-coronavirus vision is clear. We need government that is more active, more dynamic and more resilient. And at a time when our dependence on government has been laid bare, and every sector of society runs to the State for aid, the opportunity to make that case has never been greater. ❖



The State and Social Marketing: can we embrace change?



Social marketing – the use of commercial marketing and communication techniques for social purposes – is a powerful tool for positively and voluntarily changing the behaviours of individuals and populations.

Social marketing is more than the use of just social media, or advertising, or any other single tool; it is the strategic choice and use of a combination of techniques, products and technologies to achieve voluntary behaviour change for social good.

Social marketing in New Zealand has a varied recent history. It has come in and out of fashion with different administrations, and the public sector's institutional understanding of the evidence base and key tenets of good practice has waxed and waned. Achieving social behaviour change is complex and there are many traps for inexperienced or careless players: underinvestment, over-communication, and short-termism to name just a few.

The pandemic and the long term social-impacts it will create provide fresh challenges for social marketing and behaviour change practitioners in the public sector. But these challenging times also bring an opportunity to reflect on lessons of the past and change how we work; to modernise our practice and make it more progressive.

Three enduring features of good practice

The success of the Government's COVID-19 communication and marketing programme, causing nearly the entire population to change working, social and recreational habits almost overnight, is evidence of just how powerful this tool can be, and how capable the public sector is of wielding it effectively, alongside strong policy and regulatory initiatives.

The actions of the New Zealand Government in March 2020 set out almost a case book for how to approach behaviour change. That's not to say they've got everything right – and hindsight will no doubt be the critic's friend – but the scale of public behaviour change and the rapidity of it, is unlike anything we've seen before.

In part, we can attribute this to the clear and obvious need to act, that was playing out on the global stage. But in mid-March the Government was walking a tightrope: if it had moved too soon, it would have moved ahead of public willingness to respond and comply. If it had



Tracey Bridges

Tracey has 25 years' experience working in social marketing and behaviour change in New Zealand and Australia. She has worked on programmes across a range of topics, including family violence prevention, mental health and injury prevention. Tracey was the founding Chair of New Zealand's Social Marketing Network.



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“First we have an opportunity to really examine how social marketing practice contributes to or reduces inequalities.”

moved too slowly it would have risked panic, confusion and losing the trust that was so crucial in bringing people along.

So the COVID-19 programme is a great case study for the enduring features of behaviour change best practice.

First, it took a multi-layered and integrated approach to communications, ensuring they were unmissable for the target audience (in this case – and perhaps for the only time in history justifiably – all New Zealanders). Rather than relying on one mechanism (for example, television advertising), the campaign was visible through news media, social media, advertising on a very wide range of channels; through partnerships and use of collateral; through word of mouth and aligned spokespeople from every agency of Government (and beyond). And it was repetitive and enduring – with briefings to media and the public happening daily and all other forms of marketing and commentary sustained throughout the lockdown phase and beyond.

The second key tenet of best practice, where the COVID-19 campaign is so strong, is its clear focus on behaviour (and a single, “non-divisible” behaviour at that). The Government didn’t ask people to “be virus-wise” or promote a bundle of behaviours (e.g., “protect our community”). Instead, the simple catch cry that headlined every communication from the start

of the COVID-19 response was “stay home”.

The third tenet of best practice (and perhaps the most important) is a focus on the audience, or citizens. The UK’s National Social Marketing Centre’s Benchmark Criteria make this clear, placing Customer Orientation as their first criterion. Successful behaviour change programmes understand and respond to what will motivate people; and what will stop them from behaving the way you need them to. We have seen with the COVID-19 communications a powerful balance held between the policy changes required by the science and economics of the pandemic; and the emotional and practical needs of the citizens who would be asked to implement those changes.

Not every programme over the years has had the success of the COVID-19 communications, in part because not all programmes have been designed in a way that is consistent with good practice; but other difficulties have also been in play. Less perceived urgency, less investment, less combined expertise in the creation of the programme and less strength in leadership have all been a feature of our practice’s history – and will likely be so in the future, for we are all human, and human behaviour change is particularly complex and difficult.

An invitation to change

As we imagine the post-COVID-19

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future, some features stand out more than others as potentially challenging for public sector behaviour change practice; and open the door to some interesting new ways to work.

These features were not absent in the past, but our practice has generally been slow to respond to them.

First we have an opportunity to really examine how social marketing practice contributes to or reduces inequalities. Despite generally setting out to reduce inequality, in some cases social marketing practice has had the opposite impact; either by increasing inequality; or increasing the stigma that is associated with inequality. To a degree, it is in the very nature of social marketing, which targets communities perceived as being most in need of change; but this is exacerbated in the way many programmes are initiated, conceived and conducted; by reinforcing dependency and deficits, and taking an expert-led, rather than community-led approach.

With the very real risk of deepening health, social and economic inequality as a result of COVID-19, we have the opportunity and the obligation to ask ourselves, how can our practice contribute to reducing inequality? What can we do differently to shift the balance of power? How can we shift our practice from paternalism to partnership?

Community-based practice and true co-design are not new concepts, and

they are in place in some programmes and some areas. But until now they have been the domain of the brave and the patient; they demand a degree of flexibility and openness that isn't always easy to achieve.

A second area for reflection for behaviour change practice lies in our response to the deepening complexity of social problems. Another opportunity we can seize now is to act on what UK think tank Demos has called the public sector's "moral obligation" to collaborate.

Collaboration has been an unresolved question for social marketing and behaviour change practice for many years. It's an area where intention and action have been slow to connect, as the time needed to collaborate generally works against the sometimes urgent (and perhaps artificial) deadlines for many behaviour change programmes. COVID-19 has shown us that collaboration can happen, even in genuinely urgent circumstances, and that determined leadership can make it happen. The benefits of that collaboration are obvious, and enduring.

The third challenge and opportunity that the pandemic and its aftermath invite us to consider is an external one. Like the others it is not new; and like the others, the current environment makes it more urgent to confront than ever – and more possible.

“A second area for reflection for behaviour change practice lies in our response to the deepening complexity of social problems.”



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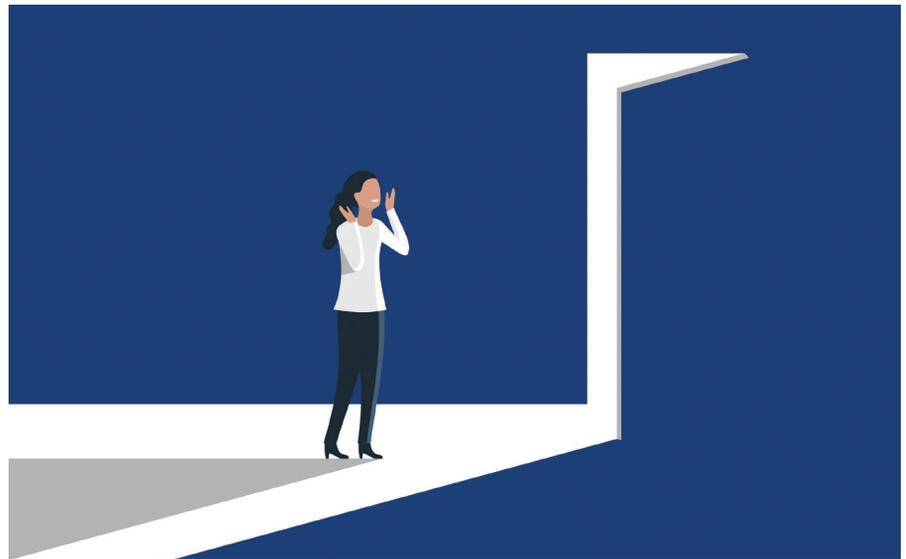
“It’s a bright future, if we are patient and brave.”

How does the rapidly changing media environment change our ways of reaching people with our behaviour change programmes? What opportunities and risks arise from the voice that social media has conferred on people previously invisible in a heavily mainstreamed media and entertainment context? If good communications is “simple clear messages, repeated often, by a variety of trusted sources”, how can we take advantage of the new environment to identify, empower and motivate a greater variety of trusted sources? Can we elevate real and diverse community voices through a rich portfolio of channels?

In a future of greater collaboration we may see fewer social marketing programmes initiating from Government, and at the same time,

more that address root causes of harm. In a future of greater citizen-centricity, we may see greater shared ownership of problems and solutions; in a future of more diverse communication channels we may see a wider range of voices sharing social good messaging in more intimate and trusted ways.

Marketing and communication are powerful tools government can use to generate real and positive change for New Zealand citizens. Right now – when so much has changed; and we are rethinking what our future might look like – we have the opportunity to embed good behaviour change practice more consistently, and create new approaches that put communities and citizens at the centre. It’s a bright future, if we are patient and brave. ❖



Raising waka, and not just yachts



While the COVID-19 crisis has reminded us of how underprepared the world was to detect and respond to emerging infectious diseases, it simultaneously revealed how well placed, and effective institutions in Te Ao Māori are in being able to react decisively and positively on behalf of their people.

While Government leaders remain focused on navigating the current crisis, we argue that making smarter investments in Iwi, in Māori institutions and in the Whānau Ora Commissioning agencies could accelerate our COVID-19 response without increasing or exacerbating inequality.

The initial Māori response package got it right

As part of the lockdown, the Government developed a Māori response package focussed on supporting hard-to-reach and vulnerable whānau. The initial focus was on supporting health and social service providers to help whānau stay at home to break the chain of transmission of the virus. To support this package, a deliberate policy decision was made to take advantage of those institutions in Te Ao Māori best placed to deliver to whānau.

Throughout the lockdown 132 Māori health and social service providers became the primary delivery agents to whānau and hapū across the motu. The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies were also involved, delivering over 100,000

care and hygiene packages to whānau.

While no formal evaluation of the “Māori response” has yet been conducted, what is known is, that through these Māori-led initiatives many whānau would otherwise have received little or no targeted support during the pandemic, had their immediate physical, emotional and spiritual needs met as Iwi and urban groups mobilised resources, including online karakia, food parcels and even firewood.

What is also of interest is just how effective and efficient whānau, hapū, Iwi, marae and local Māori providers were, when officials worked with a sense of urgency, a shared mission and gave way to local decision-making. It shows the sort of handbrake the kāwanatanga can be on rangatiratanga when it is moving at its own pace and working in its silos.

Before the pandemic, the conventional wisdom was that decisions needed to be made in Wellington, by senior officials. What appears to have worked well is flexible, shorter, and more



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Ko Pohautea te maunga, Ko Waiapu te awa, Te whānau a Hineauta me Pokaingā hapū. Nō Rangiora ahau. Deb Te Kawa is a governance and public policy consultant working between Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Ōtautahi and Rangiora.



Dr Amohia Boulton

Ngāti Ranginui
Ngāi te Rangī
Ngāti Pūkenga

Dr Amohia Bolton is the Research Director at Whakaue Research for Māori Health & Development with a career that has spanned public policy and academia.



Raising waka, and not just yachts

local decision-making chains and acceptance that by-Māori-for-Māori initiatives have worked well.

Time to acknowledge the value and mahi of Māori community health workers and Whānau Ora Navigators

We believe Māori community health workers and Whānau Ora Navigators are an integral part of the health and social services workforce.

They work in a culturally distinctive manner, using a specific context, that gives effect to Māori health development aspirations as well as rangatiratanga (Reid and Cram, 2005).

Throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, they proved their value. In a complex and demanding environment, with the leadership and support from various institutions in Te Ao Māori, they were an incredibly effective element in the Government's COVID-19 response.

It's time to give Māori community health workers and Whānau Ora Navigators greater recognition of the unique role they play in the delivery of public health, primary health care services and social services while linking this recognition to appropriate remuneration and ensuring ongoing

role development is met within a Māori worldview and whānau ora context.

We need to prepare interventions that address the inequity that follows pandemics

The COVID-19 pandemic is transforming labour markets across the world. COVID-19 will raise income inequality and depress the employment prospects of the

vulnerable, including low-skilled and low-wage workers according to findings by Furceri, D., Loungani, P., Ostry, J.D. and Pizzuto, P on how previous pandemics create income inequality. Tens of millions of workers will lose their jobs, millions more will be pushed out of the workforce altogether, and some occupations will face an uncertain future. Aotearoa is not immune.

Social distancing and border control measures threaten industries and jobs that require a physical presence or *kanohi ki te kanohi* in the workplace. Said differently, those unable to work 'remotely' or 'online' will face a significantly higher risk of reductions in hours or pay or permanent layoff.

Schulze and Hurren for Tokana Te Raki and BERL (2020) find that sixty-six per cent of Māori workers will



“The COVID-19 pandemic is transforming labour markets across the world.”

Raising waka, and not just yachts



be negatively affected by COVID-19. They also find an entire generation of rangatahi (72%) are working in industries and occupations that are adversely affected by the response to COVID-19 resulting in a lost generation, amplifying the existing intergenerational inequality.

Some of the gains in gender equality that the PSA has helped secure could be undone. That is because women are disproportionately concentrated in the frontline roles which are regarded as 'essential'. In effect, these women bear the burden of being some of the least well-paid employees, while also carrying the risk of exposure to COVID-19, and the substantial burden of childcare and domestic chores.

Politicians, commentators, and policy advisors alike need to stop assuming the impact of COVID-19 is shared evenly. It is not. We are not all in this together. Some will do more lifting than others. Every major epidemic this century has raised income inequality and lowered the population-to-employment ratio for those with basic education but not those with advanced degrees. We need to start keeping an eye on vulnerable populations, including Māori, rangatahi, women in low-paid professions and part-time employees.

Accelerate whānau centred policy and whānau ora delivery models, while decolonising public institutions

We would like to see a Public Service focussed on leading and working with its Treaty partner to create a better and different future.

A close reading of the review commissioned by Whānau Ora Minister Peeni Henare in 2018 is illuminating. That review, Tipu Mātoro ki te Ao, paints a vision of progress and positive changes for the whānau and families who engage with the Whānau Ora agencies.

The review found a passive Public Service and senior leadership ensured mainstream agencies did not adopt whānau-centred approaches or understand the positive outcomes being delivered by the Whānau Ora agencies.

Noting that most of the public policy capability now resides in the private sector, tertiary institutes and community sector, the Public Service needs to rethink its approach to developing its Māori workforce. It cannot keep expecting its Māori staff to do all the heavy lifting or assume Māori public servants and Māori consultants will do work for free.

Alongside these moves we also believe the public sector needs to address its institutional racism and its attitudes that entrench negative attitudes about whānau, hapū, Iwi and Māori roles and our contribution to society.

Officials need a deliberate process that enables them to challenge the dominance of colonial views of

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knowledge production and service delivery.

This might involve service delivery approaches that use local context to prioritise needs, experiences, and beliefs – rather than generic national response delivered from Wellington. It might also include the acceptance that different theoretical perspectives on what works and does not work exist, rather than dismissing them as outdated or lacking evidence or accountability.

More likely, given the privileges that accrue in public sector bargains, it will also include officials who want leadership and senior management roles having to demonstrate a number of core competencies such as: an understanding of the history of Aotearoa; cultural competency in Te Ao Māori; knowledge and understanding of kawa and tikanga and their importance to Māori society; fluency in te reo Māori; and equity analysis.

On the positive side, the public sector has been talking about collaboration, inclusion and shared accountability for many years, with some progress in pockets. It is possible that the change underway as a result of COVID-19 can help accelerate practical changes to bring these values to life.

Summary

It is hard to believe that Aotearoa can go back to its old normal. Business

owners are already examining how to keep the positives associated with remote working while maintaining a small office or front counter presence. Building and construction teams are designing new production lines, team arrangements and schedules. Universities are moving classes online.

We think there will be a new normal for the way the public sector thinks about policy and service delivery to whānau, hapū and Māori. To be successful, it will need to raise the waka, boats, canoes, as well as the yachts.

In doing so it will need to take the best of the COVID-19 experience and move away from short-term, politicised policy responses to always-on partnerships and systems that are focussed on balancing kāwanatanga and rangatiratanga. This will mean locking in decision-making processes that ensure decisions are made closest to the problem as well as the solution. It also means analysing and speaking about the differential harm COVID-19 will have on some – but not all.

Finally, it involves the public service accelerating whānau-centred policy and Whānau Ora delivery models while starting to long journey to decolonise itself. The blueprint for both streams of work is in Tipu Mātoro ki te Ao (2018) and the Waitangi Tribunal's health outcomes report (2019). ❖

“It is hard to believe that Aotearoa can go back to its old normal.”

Our health system and services: A best possible future?



Aotearoa has a health system that is the envy of many other countries. It delivers high quality care at a reasonable cost; has an approach that enables citizens and residents to be covered for most health care costs and has a highly skilled and dedicated workforce.

However, significant changes are being observed in the health systems of most developed countries, and New Zealand is no exception.

In thinking about change, it is often easy to imagine an inevitable and smooth forward trend. In practice, change is much more likely to be a meandering river with slack water, pools, dams as well as disruptive rapids (Hickson, 2020).

Overview

This chapter considers the history of organisational change in the provision of health services in Aotearoa New Zealand, the rapids endured, the tributaries followed and the potential paths ahead.

We draw on past futures thinking, current assessments of the state of health services and the disruptive potential of COVID-19. In the light of the recent recommendations of the *Health and Disability System Review* (Health and Disability System Review, 2020) (aka The Simpson Report), we are entering a period where we are pinning our hopes on a new health structure to deliver better outcomes, including reduced inequities.

As the complex task of implementation begins, we consider the potential for the health system to enter an eddy of change characterised by a swirl of debate over structures and the sequencing of reform.

Where we have come from

Through to the rapid-filled 1990s

Aotearoa has been aiming to have a free, integrated health service focused on prevention since a national health service was first proposed in the 1930s. We weren't able to achieve this, but we did get full government funding and ownership of hospitals with free hospital care, along with government subsidies to support primary care delivered by independent professionals, albeit with user charges for many services.

Many reviews since the 1930s have supported the original aims and have suggested significant reforms, but in practice governments here tend to change structures, focusing on the parts of the system that they run.

Reforms in the 1960s and 1970s amalgamated hospitals, while those in the 1980s linked public health



Dr Jacqueline Cumming
and
Dr Lesley Middleton

Jackie has qualifications in both economics and public policy. She previously worked for a number of government departments and agencies, including the Department of Labour (including a secondment to the Employment Equity Taskforce)



Lesley has held previous senior management, policy and research roles in the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Health. She has a particular interest in health policy and evaluating complex interventions that benefit from a realist logic of enquiry.



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“The report particularly emphasised the lack of attention to and accountability for reducing inequalities in health.”

with hospital care to encourage a focus on health promotion and disease prevention.

The 1990s involved a complete overhaul of the system, separating roles in policy, purchasing and provision and emphasising contracting and competition to improve efficiency and responsiveness. Those 1990 reforms cost a considerable amount of money, as well as angst, and were never fully able to be fully implemented – resulting in many changes to the original plans. Emerging from these rapids of the 1990s was a single health funding authority to ensure consistency and reduce contracting costs, and an emphasis on provider co-operation rather than competition.

2020 tributaries: Alternatives mapped out in 1997

In 1997 a futures project set out to develop scenarios for the New Zealand health sector in 2020. Looking back at the five scenarios developed in 1997, early signals of the importance of concepts of wellbeing rather than illness and the importance of consumer empowerment were outlined in one scenario entitled *Power to the People*.

Another scenario – “*Two tiers*” – presented a health sector in 2020 where New Zealanders had given away any desire to have a universally accessible publicly funded and owned health system, with the State providing only an inadequate safety net for the uninsured.

Areas we must address to improve our health system

- Major inequities in health and access
- Major inequities between ACC and Health
- A narrow concept of health and health services
- Complex funding rules that differ across services and programmes
- Significant barriers to access to primary care – Through user charges
- Inequitable funding in primary care
- Poor cousins – Primary mental health, disability support, and dental care are not well supported
- Fragmentation of services – Too often, services are being organised around those delivering care rather than the needs of those receiving services
- Lack of community and service user roles in decision-making.

Our health system and services: A best possible future?



In this scenario, public confidence in the publicly funded and owned health system fades and a focus on individual rights and entitlements prevents progress towards more collective goals and an emphasis on social and economic determinants of health. The arc of health policy change since 1997 has avoided this scenario; however, one can point to the more nuanced ways in which the private sector has made inroads into health delivery, such as in aged residential care and the more recent corporatisation of primary health care.

The titles of the final three scenarios sum up further possible futures and these centred on: a technically highly tuned and less politicised version of the present system (*A Technocrat's Dream*); a system driven by the introduction of private health care plans similar to the original 1990s plans (*Positively Private and Global*); and ad hoc adjustments to current challenges (*Muddling Through*).

The calmer 2000s and 2010s

A combination of *Power to the People* and *Muddling Through* would be the best way to describe what has happened in Aotearoa New Zealand in recent years.

In part to avoid the turmoil of the 1990s, there has been a period of relative organisational stability from 2000 onwards: for the past 20 years, policy change has relied on

a sequence of strategic directions urging more attention towards the health needs of populations, stronger collaboration between different parts of the system, and managing within the resources available.

In the early 2000s, we re-established a population health focus through (now) 20 local District Health Boards (DHBs) with elected Board members and worked to strengthen primary care, including through the establishment of new Primary Health Organisations (PHOs) which aimed to enhance community and consumer engagement.

The result has been expansions in the role of primary care, including a wider range of health professionals, and a recent introduction of better primary mental health services. There have also been some improvements in consumer and community engagement in this setting, but not as far as originally envisaged.

The introduction of Whānau Ora as a philosophy of holistic health and development operationalised by Māori and Pacific providers is one obvious example of the ways in which ideas around wellbeing have received health policy attention since 1997 (Smith et al, 2019).

2020

The Health and Disability System Review

“Having pointed out problems with system complexity and fragmentation, suggesting there should be new agencies is remarkable.”



Our health system and services: A best possible future?

“In the COVID-19 era, it is harder, however, to spot what the limits to State spending actually are. Economic orthodoxy is not as strong as it has been, as governments demonstrate little difficulty (or opposition) to financing significant government action.”

Signalled as a once in a generation opportunity, for the past two years a Health and Disability System Review (the Review) has been taking stock of our health system. In an Interim Report (Health and Disability System Review, 2019), the Review both recognised the strengths of the system but also pointed to a number of key problems – most particularly the lack of progress in reducing inequities in health. It also pointed to poor long-term planning; a lack of certainty for key planning, funding and delivery organisations over future funding flows; a lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of key organisations (e.g., DHBs and PHOs); as well as to poor integration and a limited role for consumers and communities in decision-making.

The Final Report of the Ministerial review recommended a series of new structures as important to achieving key policy goals. The report particularly emphasised the lack of attention to and accountability for reducing inequalities in health. It recommended the establishment of a new agency – Health NZ – to enhance planning and commissioning, to more clearly set priorities, to support DHBs in their work, and to strengthen accountability for achieving key goals such as reductions in inequities. DHBs would be reduced in number to between 8 and 10 but would also emphasise a locality approach in the planning for and

delivery of services, especially primary care services. PHOs would no longer formally exist. It also recommended the establishment of a new Māori Health Authority to work at all levels of the health care system to plan and prioritise Māori health.

Having pointed out problems with system complexity and fragmentation, suggesting there should be new agencies is remarkable. As time is absorbed in setting these up and working out the various relationships between them, as well as developing new plans to guide the system, the potential is high that we enter an eddy of change with the opportunity to bring decision making and services closer to communities further and further away.

Another risk, given the lack of detail on what these various new agencies will do, is that they suffer the fate of previous organisations. For example, a major issue with the 1990s reforms was a double-up in policy making roles across the Ministry of Health and Health Funding Authority; while twenty years on from the implementation of the Primary Health Care strategy that set up PHOs, we were still debating what the roles of PHOs are or should be.

The impact of COVID-19 – how slow or fast might be the eddy we end up in?

Our health system and services: A best possible future?



Health policy is always difficult for governments, as many different needs compete for scarce resources, including funding. Just to keep up with current service delivery costs significant amounts of money and aiming to fill key gaps in service delivery could chew up even more resource.

In the COVID-19 era, it is harder, however, to spot what the limits to State spending actually are. Economic orthodoxy is not as strong as it has been, as governments demonstrate little difficulty (or opposition) to financing significant government action. The health sector is but one area crying out for new funding – particularly in public health as well as in aiming to catch up in areas where we have fallen behind as a result of COVID-19, such as in elective surgery and cancer screening and treatment. Nonetheless, we can imagine that financial pressures will re-emerge in the not-too-distant future.

During the pandemic in Aotearoa New Zealand, some previous barriers between secondary and primary care dissolved, and the role of communities in supporting the response and the consequences was highlighted.

But gaps were also exposed in terms of public health planning and resourcing, in service providers' connections with community health providers, in the ability

of privately owned providers to support a collective interest with programmatic funding, and in connections with Māori and Pacific communities. The voice of unions, such as the PSA, also seemed to be missed in formal deliberations. How different parts of the sector have stronger input into regular and emergency decision-making is a key issue for the future.

Conclusions

Internationally, COVID-19 has starkly exposed deep health inequities and underlined structural disadvantage. While Aotearoa has yet to see a death toll that directly reflects this, the second wave of cases has shown that the potential is there for some of our least well off populations to suffer more from the virus, while the economic impact of the pandemic will also impact hard on less financially well-off communities. The potential is there for a redoubling of the debate of how we should best work to reduce inequities in health, and where to spend our scarce resources to best improve health and wellbeing.

The Aotearoa New Zealand response to COVID-19 has shown, however, that when governments really want to achieve things, they can move quickly and fund accordingly – we would love to see such a determined approach to reducing inequities in coming years.

“ The Aotearoa New Zealand response to COVID -19 has shown, however, that when governments really want to achieve things, they can move quickly and fund accordingly – we would love to see such a determined approach to reducing inequities in coming years.”



Our health system and services: A best possible future?

“Best practice in policymaking involves targeting the right intervention in the right context, rather than a broad scattergun approach.”

Future directions

Our focus must turn to the broader determinants of health, health promotion and disease prevention, with an enhanced and well-integrated primary care sector with global funding (as opposed to programmatic funding) and fewer barriers (including financial) to access to services. Community and consumer engagement must increase to build on the knowledge of local needs and what works to improve health in those communities.

There must be greater ethnic diversity in health personnel, to match current and future population demographics. Finally, equity needs to be front and centre, with a stronger, independent, well-resourced leadership and funding role for Māori and Pacific

populations, including more equitable funding arrangements that better ensure greater needs are funded concomitantly.

Whilst none of these issues are ignored in the recent Review, details on how to get there are sketchy. Best practice in policymaking involves targeting the right intervention in the right context, rather than a broad scattergun approach.

With governments eager to demonstrate they are taking action, structural changes launched under the guise of fixing the system are tempting. However, without sufficient attention to the implementation details we are at risk of entering an eddy of change and miss spotting the existing key points of community leverage that will improve the system. ❖

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The welfare state beyond COVID-19 – the case for a step-change



It is over 80 years since the Social Security Act in 1938 solidified and extended the foundations of New Zealand's welfare state. But this landmark legislation never fulfilled the ambitious goals of its instigators for a fair and inclusive society.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only laid bare various long-standing problems; it has also generated substantial new policy challenges. Equally, however, the pandemic has demonstrated the capacity for prompt and effective governmental measures to protect the public interest when societal need and political will coincide.

With the worst of the health impacts of the pandemic hopefully behind us in New Zealand, there is an opportunity to rethink the design of our welfare state.

COVID-19 has exposed a series of problems with current welfare state arrangements. First, the level of income support for many of the country's most vulnerable citizens is utterly inadequate. To quote the 2019 report of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 'many New Zealanders are living in desperate situations' with existing income support arrangements failing 'to cover even basic costs for many people'. As a result, there are significant rates of material hardship and financial stress.

The Government's various economic support packages since March 2020 have helped mitigate the worst impacts of the pandemic. The measures

have included: comprehensive wage subsidies; a modest increase in core benefit rates and the Winter Energy Payment; changes to the in-work tax credit; and a new, temporary COVID-19 income relief payment. Realistically, New Zealand can expect much higher unemployment over the medium-term, with greater income insecurity and material hardship.

Secondly, there are multiple housing issues. There is an inadequate supply of good quality yet affordable rental accommodation, there are significant levels of homelessness and overcrowding with long waiting lists and waiting times for social housing, and homeownership rates are at their lowest in three generations.

Thirdly, the welfare state is beset with injustices, inconsistencies and perverse incentives:

- the country lacks a principled and comprehensive approach to the indexation of all forms of social assistance and income tax rates
- income support arrangements differ for those who suffer equally disabling accidents and illnesses
- dental services are poorly funded relative to most other health services



Jonathan Boston

Jonathan is a Professor of Public Policy in the School of Government at Victoria University of Wellington.

His research interests include: climate change policy (both mitigation and adaptation); child poverty; governance (especially anticipatory governance); public management; tertiary education funding (especially research funding); and welfare state design.



Putting Progressive Thinking at the centre

Fourteen brilliant contributors joined our webinar series between March and September and more than 3,000 members and supporters tuned in. The purpose of the webinar series was to reach out to and connect with our members throughout and beyond lockdown, providing a place for thought and collaboration as we map our way through this unprecedented time. Our Progressive Thinking format demanded we abridge each contribution, and feature just 10 of 14 chapters. You can read every chapter in full at:

www.psa.org.nz/progressivethinking.



Janie Walker, Be Collective

Janie's chapter; *Being a fisherwoman or a gardener: How COVID-19 lockdown turned Community on its head* looks into the ways we are each rethinking our roles and responsibilities in our communities, in our workplaces, in our families,

and in our union movement in the context of COVID-19. Janie presented her webinar alongside Leora Hirsh (Manager of DIA's Strategic Programmes and Partnerships), Megan Courtney (Inspiring Communities), Rebecca Morahan (WELLfed) traversing the potential community presents in crisis, community as a place of work, and how the future design and delivery of our public and community services can support new and emerging roles – from volunteering to senior leadership.

Biography

Janie's life has been a mix of paid and unpaid work opportunities. Highlights include running a creative writing workshop for the Wellington Mosque community post-March 15; senior engagement roles with local and central government and writing a children's play called *An Elephant Never Forgets* for Wellington Zoo. Her academic achievements

include a Master's degree in community climate change adaptation in Fiji, and translating Sanskrit into Tibetan. She currently works for Be Collective, a community organisation with a technology solution that supports engagement and action through volunteering.



Troy Baisden, New Zealand Association of Scientists

Troy's chapter; *Restoring research for the restoration of wellbeings* looks at the role of science and research in a post-coronavirus world. Troy's chapter examines the

health of our research system in achieving three main goals: building and delivering new knowledge, growing and maintaining expertise, and providing society with access to and engagement by experts. Troy argues the heart of what we need is diverse, young Kiwis at the heart of dynamic teams leading bottom-up innovation across the research, government, and business sectors.

Biography

Troy is a Professor at the University of Waikato and is the President of the New Zealand Association of Scientists. He holds a PhD from the Department of

Putting Progressive Thinking at the centre

Environmental Science, Policy and Management at the University of California, Berkeley, and is a Principal Investigator in the Te Pūnaha Matatini Centre of Research Excellence.



Paula Tesoriero, New Zealand's Disability Rights Commissioner

Paula's role is to protect and promote the rights of disabled New Zealanders. Her chapter titled, *Building a more inclusive society in a post-COVID19 climate*,

speaks to the role of the public and community sectors as employers in the building an inclusive New Zealand post-COVID-19. She looks at the impact of the COVID-19 response on disabled people, and how gaps in services and data, and the lack of understanding of disabled people's lives, were highlighted in the response. Paula says there are opportunities for the re-build that should not be missed in creating the inclusive New Zealand we seek, such as incorporating universal design and accessibility into shovel-ready and other recovery projects.

Biography

Paula Tesoriero MNZM is a world-champion athlete and a former senior public service manager. Paula is a governance expert having served on several boards including the Halberg Disability Sport Foundation, New Zealand Artificial Limb Service, Sport Wellington

and Paralympics New Zealand. She is also a member of the New Zealand Sports Tribunal. A law graduate from Victoria University, Paula has worked in private practice and as a General Manager at Statistics NZ and the Ministry of Justice.



Andrea Black, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU)

Andrea's chapter, *"User charges and cost recovery: why don't we call it a tax"*,

uses the examples of Student Loans and Child Support to cast a light on just how un-progressive our tax system is. Andrea says that while New Zealand might pride itself on a tax to GDP ratio below the OECD average (32.7% v 34.3% in 2018) that is not without consequences. While New Zealand is nowhere near the scale of user charges or cost recovery for public services as the United States; we are still a solid performer. Andrea says all too often the effect of them is regressive, whether it is student loans, child support, or GP fees.

Biography

Andrea is a Senior Associate of the Institute of Governance and Policy Studies and was formerly the Independent Advisor to the Tax Working Group. She has an established career as an international tax specialist and is a former Inland Revenue and Treasury staffer.



The welfare state beyond COVID-19 – the case for a step-change

“If poverty rates are to be reduced significantly, the housing crisis must be vigorously tackled.”

- many low-to-middle earners, especially those with children, face very high effective marginal tax rates, thus disincentivising higher earnings
- the way income is defined for policy purposes is highly inconsistent; and
- there are multiple discrepancies between the tax system and the benefit system – for instance, in the tax system, the unit of assessment is the individual, whereas in the benefit system the unit of assessment varies depending on a person’s relationship status.

COVID-19 has also illuminated the impact of our highly means-tested system of income support. Welfare benefits are largely unobtainable for people who lose their job if their partner is in paid employment. Consequently, many families affected by the economic impact of the pandemic have faced a dramatic reduction in their household income. The government has felt obliged to respond with a temporary income relief payment for those most affected by the tight means-testing of welfare benefits.

Aside from COVID-19, New Zealand’s welfare state must be capable of addressing many other challenges, not least the growing impacts of the fourth industrial revolution, significant demographic changes including population ageing, evolving family structures, and the negative impacts

of climate change and ecological degradation.

How, then, should the welfare state be redesigned? Given both the multiplicity and magnitude of the policy challenges, modest tinkering will be insufficient; a more systematic and transformative step-change is required.

Such an approach must be founded on well-established principles of social justice; it must uphold the provisions of, and principles underpinning, the Treaty of Waitangi; it must be informed by sound evidence and rigorous analysis, and it must be alert to likely future risks and challenges.

Most of the policy responses needed to address our current problems are expensive. COVID-19 has substantially increased the level of public debt. Realistically, a fairer and more effective welfare state will require additional public expenditure. This, in turn, will require extra revenue. Another challenge is time. Reforming our health care system will take years. Tackling the chronic shortage of good quality housing will take at least a generation.

If public support for the welfare state is to be rekindled, significant policy changes appear necessary. First, the extent to which social provision is means-tested must be eased, with a greater reliance on universally-funded programmes or more lightly targeted funding arrangements.

The welfare state beyond COVID-19 – the case for a step-change



Examples might include a fully-funded primary health care system, an extension of the universal component of the Best-Start Tax Credit by several years, reduced abatement rates for the Family Tax Credit, and sick pay provisions that are more comprehensive.

There is also a case for cushioning the impact of job losses for those with employed partners.

One option would be to disregard the partner's income below a certain income threshold for a while, thus enabling those affected the opportunity to seek alternative employment without undue financial stress. A more radical alternative would be to extend the contributory principle, which currently applies only to accident compensation, to other forms of income support. The funding of unemployment is an obvious candidate. But any such social insurance scheme for unemployment would need to be mandatory and ensure universal coverage for all those of working age, whether full-time or part-time, employed or self-



employed. Otherwise, gender and ethnic inequalities are likely to be exacerbated.

The current benefit system must be substantially altered as well. First-tier benefits, such as Jobseeker or Parent Support need to be more generous, reducing reliance on third-tier benefits, such as Temporary Additional Support. Equally, if poverty rates

are to be reduced significantly, the housing crisis must be vigorously tackled. This will require a large and enduring public investment in social housing and concerted efforts to ensure higher rates of homeownership.

The fiscal implications of such measures are huge. Realistically, there is no option but to increase tax rates and secure additional sources of revenue – for instance, via a capital gains tax, inheritance tax or land tax and/or new social insurance levies. Politically, this will be hard. But COVID-19 has created the opportunity for transformative policy reform. What is needed now is a government that is willing and able to seize this opportunity. ❖

“The COVID-19 pandemic has not only laid bare various long-standing problems; it has also generated substantial new policy challenges.”

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The future of environmental regulation



Dr Mike Joy

Mike has a BSc, MSc and PhD in Ecology from Massey University. After seeing first-hand the decline in freshwater health in New Zealand, he became an outspoken advocate for environmental protection.

He has been working for two decades at the interface of science and policy in New Zealand with a goal of strengthening connections between science, policy and real outcomes to address the multiple environmental issues facing New Zealand.

The role of environmental regulation is to prevent harm to the natural world, not only for its sake but to save humankind from self-destruction.

When framed as this fundamental need to maintain the planet's life supporting capacity, the importance of regulation is clear.¹ We maintain the planet's ability to support life, or we have nothing. Thus, it overshadows anything else we care about. The evidence² is crystal clear that we have crashed through the known safe limits our planetary boundaries³. We are in global ecological deficit⁴.

Here in New Zealand, the failure of environmental regulation is stark and tragic. The Ministry for the Environment's five-yearly summary⁵ of the state of the environment outlines a litany of neglect and dereliction. To put this in a global perspective, a 2010 comparison⁶ of the environmental impact of 179 countries showed that New Zealand ranked 161st in the world on a per capita basis and 124th on overall impact. In the race to the bottom, we are highly competitive.

For the last three decades the mainstay of our environmental regulation legislation has been the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991⁷. At its core is the goal of "sustainable management of natural and physical resources" while considering future generations.

However, the reality we have seen is that government at both central and

local levels has spectacularly failed to apply or enforce this legislation. As a result, the life supporting capacity of our ecosystems: terrestrial, freshwater, marine and atmospheric has not been protected, and the foreseeable needs of future generations prescribed in the RMA will not be met. We have fuelled the economic growth of the past several decades by burning our children's future.

One big reason for the failure of environmental regulation is the inevitable twisting and usurping of the ideals of any such legislation by the literally thousands of well-resourced and well-paid people funded by the industries harming the environment to find ways to evade or avoid them.

Another reason for failure stems from political expediency at all levels of government. The problem is that government at any level operates in an economic growth⁸ paradigm and this inevitably clashes with the uncompromising and non-linear⁹ reality of biophysical limits to growth¹⁰. These are real inescapable limits, they cannot be fiscally ameliorated over the long term and claims that environmental harm can be decoupled from economic growth have been debunked¹¹.

The future of environmental regulation



This politicisation of environmental regulation can be seen in many ways, but at local government level in New Zealand it is revealed by the capture of regulators by vested interests, known as agency capture¹². A recent comprehensive report evaluating the environmental outcomes of the RMA¹³ highlighted this agency capture of regional councils revealed for example as “a lack of enthusiasm for setting strong limits for freshwater due to a preponderance of agricultural interests in the council” (page 20). The report found that the weakest limitations on implementing the RMA are on managing cumulative effects.

An example of the failure to manage the impact of cumulative effects highlighted in the report¹⁴ is the hundreds of consented discharges into the Manawatu River, which I looked at in depth a few years ago. All these discharge consents were granted because their effects were, purported by the applicant to be ‘less than minor’. Clearly however, hundreds of less than minor impacts added to many other diffuse impacts not requiring consent inevitably results in major impacts. Almost every one of the many tens of consent applications I have read over a few decades has claimed that the effects of the the consent being applied for would be “less than minor”. Consents officers and scientists at Auckland Regional Council a decade ago told me of a local consultant they openly referred to as Dr. Less-than-minor because that

was his conclusion on every consent application.

Nearly all the resource consents have conditions assigned giving limits on a range of parameters in the discharge and any effects on the river receiving it. These parameters are monitored (nearly always by the applicant) and results reported to the regional council as prescribed in the consents. Again, using the Manawatu River as an example, one of the consents I looked at it in detail was for a discharge of wastewater into the Oroua River by the Manawatū District Council.

I found this district council often failed to provide the results of monitoring as required and in more than a decade of reporting they had never fully complied with their consent conditions. The penalty for their non-compliance was a sad face icon on the Regional Council compliance summary report sent back to them. Obviously, this sad face stamp had not had the desired effect and the breaches had not stopped years later when I again looked at the compliance reports.

For humankind to have a future we must ensure that our environment is regulated putting life supporting capacity above all other considerations and furthermore the regulations must be enforced. The clear lesson from the way different countries handled the COVID-19 pandemic is that strong government regulation based on independent non-politicised science is crucial for a successful

“ We have fuelled the economic growth of the past several decades by burning our children’s future.”



The future of environmental regulation

“The clear lesson from the way different countries handled the COVID-19 pandemic is that strong government regulation based on independent non-politicised science is crucial for a successful outcome.”

outcome. Thus, I suggest the solution for New Zealand is truly independent monitoring and enforcement of environmental regulation so that agencies undertaking this work are no longer captured by vested interests; financial or political.

There are potentially many ways to achieve this, but one model exists and could be built on and that is the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. Properly resourced

this office could take on the task of overseeing independent monitoring and enforcement of the environment. For freshwaters particularly another option, a Waterways Commission¹⁵ has been suggested by the New Zealand Māori Council as a solution to the failings of the Crown to protect freshwaters. The models exist, the mandate¹⁶ is there. It is now up to government leaders to ensure the crucial changes happen immediately. ❖

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Reimagining New Zealand's journey to a zero-carbon future



As we navigate our way through COVID-19, we have the chance to reimagine what our journey to a zero carbon future looks like.

People often introduce me as New Zealand's youngest District Councillor. It always makes for a strange segue for what I want to say, as if my work for better youth housing on the Kāpiti Coast, or the urgent need for climate action should somehow be seen alongside the number of candles on my birthday cake.

After only one year in office, it's already clear to me that the challenges we face in Local Government won't be solved by councillors like me growing up, or growing tired in these institutions – but by more people from more diverse backgrounds standing up, and making their voices heard around our council tables.

I grew up, and still live, on the Kāpiti Coast. I'm here now, writing about the future of our public services, a just transition and how local government can support our journey to a zero carbon future.

I am writing, impatient for our council tables to be more representative. Impatient for a time when climate change is at the heart of all our decision-making, and for a time when we are united in our work to safeguard a liveable planet for future generations.

Urgency and lockdown are interesting bedfellows. As countries all over the world change to cope with COVID-19 and grapple with the economic upheaval in its wake, I see people asking whether now is the right time to talk about climate change.

Right now, I can see the impacts of climate change from where I'm sitting. My home has the Tasman Sea for a front yard, a beach as my playground, and I have spent a good part of my life already watching it change irreparably. Storm surges and sea level rise is something constantly on the minds of my community – and for our Pacific neighbours? They're fighting for their lives now with the water at their doorsteps.

This is also very real for the Kāpiti Coast District Council. We represent a low-lying coastal community. Many of the people who put me here will bear the brunt of the effects of more severe weather events and rising sea-levels.

So adaptation is going to be a massive part of this mahi – making sure communities are better able to deal with these challenges when they inevitably come. That means we have a responsibility to tackle this head on and discuss defences such as



Sophie Handford

Sophie is a climate change activist and Paekākāriki - Raumati Ward Councillor at Kāpiti Coast District Council.

In 2019, Sophie won the youth category at the Wellingtonian of the Year awards and jointly won the Wellingtonian of the Year Supreme Award for her work coordinating the nationwide School Strike for Climate.



Reimagining New Zealand's journey to a zero-carbon future

“We have complex problems to solve, but they're not beyond us.”

sea walls, it means we have to build infrastructure in new and different ways.

When I was growing up not many people would have foreseen the growth on the coast. We are now a commuter hub, and our population is growing rapidly. How people get to and from work here makes a massive difference to our community's carbon footprint.

These are the conversations and questions that motivated me to run for office. As a global and national society, we know we need to make some serious shifts in the way we operate and the things we value – from profit to people and the planet. We know we need to limit temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees if we are to avoid the irreversible impacts of catastrophic climate change, and we know we don't have much time.

I am clear on where we need to get to, which means that my energy, and the energy of the people fighting for a stronger, greener economy is focused on the journey.

We have to take people with us

We have to make sure no one is left behind. As we reorient our communities and our work we have to make sure the transition to a zero-carbon economy is fair and shows compassion for those who will feel the impact the most.

We have to put climate change at the heart of our decision-making

When we are considering the cost in money value of certain purchases or decisions, we should be considering the societal cost and the environmental cost as well. We can make decisions which hold economic development and positive climate impacts in the same breath. In fact we must – without a liveable climate and functioning ecosystems, we won't have an economy.

For councillors like me this means connecting our work to an overarching purpose of protecting our environment; including climate friendly public transport, community resilience for living locally and infrastructure to support the rollout of electric or hydrogen vehicles.

We have to build community resilience

If the COVID-19 environment has taught us anything, it's the importance of community when forced to adapt to change. We need structures and services that allow us to survive and thrive locally. What people have realised during lockdown is what a life closer to home could look like. I have talked to so many people plagued by the daily commute into the CBD from the Coast – and guess what? We don't need to do it. We can commute less, consume less, and come away with more.

Reimagining New Zealand's journey to a zero-carbon future



We have to give some stuff up

This means we have to own up to what's not working. If we are to adequately respond to the climate crisis we need to embrace the idea of co-designing services from the ground up. We can already see the start of this in public service engagement with Te Ao Māori. That means our fundamental framework of policy development might look a little different, we might have to create a bit more space for diverse

interests and perspectives if we are to truly develop a shared vision.

Making the switch to a sustainable economy, will take considerable investment. That includes not just the funding needed to support a just transition but also investing in our public services so they're properly resourced to support this. We have complex problems to solve, but they're not beyond us. We need to be creative and re-envision the better world that we all know is possible. ❖



“We have to own up to what's not working.”



Local Government and Wellbeing in a Post-COVID-19 World



Peter McKinlay

Peter is the Executive Director of McKinlay Douglas Ltd. He has nearly 30 years' experience as a researcher and adviser on local governance and local government.

His major work focus currently is the shift to wellbeing as the principal focus of central government, and the concurrent statutory empowerment of local government to promote community wellbeing.

Globally, an enormous amount of high-quality thinking and evidence-based research is going into how societies should approach a post-COVID-19 recovery strategy.

Much of this thinking is around a view that unites reformulating democracy around empowered communities. It means devolving centralised powers to local areas, establishing local systems of decision-making based on genuine engagement and deliberation, and requiring elected representatives at the national and local levels to take far more account of their constituents' views when deciding policy and legislation between elections¹.

It's an approach supported by reflecting on what contributes to community wellbeing. The Carnegie UK Trust, which has worked on the development of wellbeing policy and practice in several different national jurisdictions and co-published research with the OECD, adopts environmental, social, economic and democratic outcomes as its four wellbeing domains.

From its experience in working in several jurisdictions, including Northern Ireland, it has concluded voice, choice, control, and a sense of belonging are integral elements of community wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, the trust is among a very significant number of think tanks, arguing that building resilient communities should be at the heart of wellbeing.

Increasingly this is seen as part of the core business of local government. This flows from the reality that local government is closer to its communities than other parts of the public sector. Regard them as effective or incompetent, councils have the unique advantage of being the principal expression of local democracy, an advantage which will be critical for managing COVID-19 recovery strategies.

If you go back over the legislative changes and significant policy statements from central government in recent decades, there is an increasing emphasis on local government as primarily a group of local infrastructure companies with a few 'nice to haves'. Several people in local government share this view. One reason for this is that unlike local government in any other developed country jurisdiction, New Zealand local government has virtually no responsibility for the delivery of major social services.

The dominant public sector influence on wellbeing status is generally considered to be through services such as health, education, social housing, justice, and welfare but there is another dimension, the role of place.

Local Government and Wellbeing in a Post-COVID-19 World



The UK government in 2012 transferred responsibility for public health from the National Health Service (NHS) family to principal local authorities on the rationale that the principal determinants of public health are place-based. The coordination between health needs and access to local government provided recreational facilities is a positive result.

The government has made it clear that as part of the post-COVID-19 recovery strategy, there will be a substantial realignment of major responsibilities between central and local governments, including rationalisation of water and wastewater services into one or a few standalone entities and funding of infrastructure. Other possible changes include the establishment of a single building consent authority and removing the consent role from local government. All these changes reflect a concern a disaggregated local government sector has meant too much uncertainty and variation in areas where consistency and certainty are critical.

What about the local government perspective? Initially there was a very real concern the sector is losing or likely to lose some of its most substantial functions. But go back to the beginning; post-Covid-19 recovery includes reformulating democracy around empowered communities. Our public sector reforms themselves emphasise greater collaboration at a

regional level to improve wellbeing. Inevitably this means designing and delivering services to respond at a community level and ideally reflecting community preferences.

However, a ‘community-level’ begs the question of how to find New Zealand’s communities? The term ‘community’ carries with it an enormous number of different meanings depending on context and user. In the context of needing to work at a community level for service design and delivery, the primary emphasis is on place-based communities. Evidence suggests, that a complication for public sectors is that typical place-based communities identify in the order of 5000-7000-9000 people even in large metropolitan centres.

This is where local government comes into its own. Councils’ principal contribution to post-COVID-19 recoveries should be enabling and supporting resilient communities to come together to help develop solutions and support each other. Logistically this means the emergence of a new form of regional governance as developing the requisite resource capability to support communities is a matter of scale. It means councils as the advocates for, and representatives of, their communities in the development of wellbeing policy and practice.

There is a wealth of examples of how councils are working with their communities. They include Portland

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Local Government and Wellbeing in a Post-COVID-19 World

“Councils’ principal contribution to post-COVID-19 recoveries should be enabling and supporting resilient communities to come together to help develop solutions and support each other.”

Oregon’s support for resilient residents’ associations, community wealth building now being adopted by several UK and European cities (see Preston City Council), the Mayor of London’s civic crowdfunding initiative, participatory budgeting, community or neighbourhood planning, social procurement, and anchor institutions.

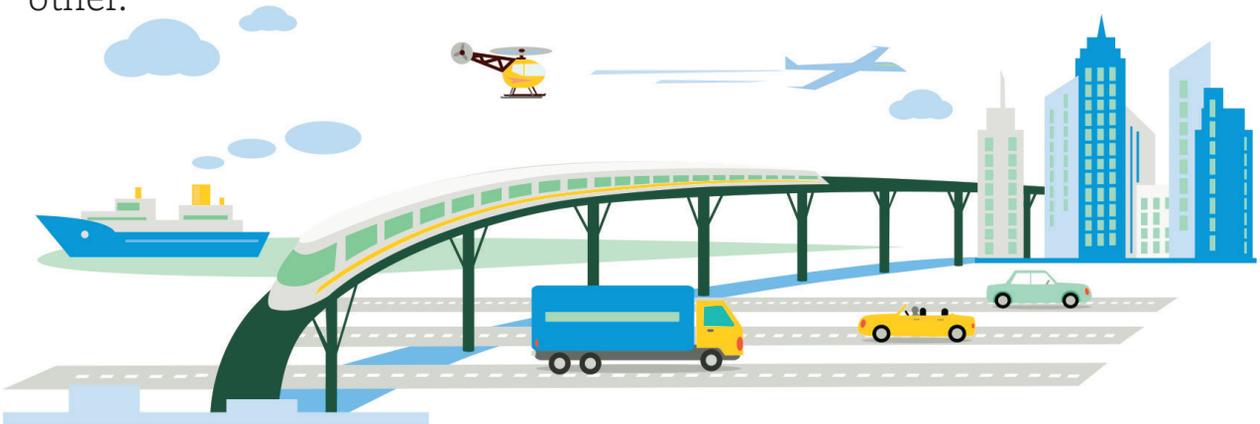
The clear message, despite New Zealand’s historical preference for top-down centralised policy-making,

is local government has a unique role which will be essential for managing the recovery from COVID-19.

We are all in this together and promoting community wellbeing is the responsibility of both central and local government, not central government bypassing local government in the belief that by acting on its own, it can find and work with New Zealand’s diverse communities. ❖

References

Much of this paragraph is taken from a recent blog by Adam Lent director of the highly regarded think tank the New Local Government Network and accessible at: <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2020/defenders-of-democracy-need-to-wake-up-urgently-to-the-threat-posed-by-another-crisis>



Should we revive the Ministry of Works?



Even before the COVID-19 crisis arrived, the Ardern Government had been finding it difficult to get important policies implemented – as one minister put it, you could pull the levers of power but nothing would happen.

The most conspicuous case was Kiwibuild, which relied on the private sector lining up quickly to build the affordable housing that the Government wanted to fund and facilitate. That programme failed when the private sector opted not to massively reallocate scarce resources from more profitable uses to foster a cheap housing boom.

Such disconnection between what the elected Government wants to do and its ability to deliver on the ground suggests that it is time to take a deep and serious look at two of the key pillars of the State sector reforms pushed in the late 1980s by the New Zealand Treasury and adopted by the Fourth Labour Government and the subsequent Bolger/Shipley National Government. Those two pillars were the “funder-provider split” and the adoption of a “new public management” model for running the civil service.

The longstanding model of a career public service, headed by senior figures drawn from within the public service ranks, and directed by ministers who were directly accountable for the delivery of public services, was dumped. The public service now operates under a managerial model with outside appointees on short-term

contracts at the top. Many services are delivered under the funder-provider split by private-sector contractors and autonomous entities (such as DHBs) separate from the relevant departments, who are contracted to perform the front-line work. Meanwhile, government departments responsible for negotiation and oversight of these contracts have been stripped of professional expertise in favour of generic managers.

The contracting process is often capricious. In health and education, the central Government has abdicated responsibility by decentralising decision-making, using the “funder-provider split” as cover for withdrawing resources. Yet, responsibility for the poor quality outcomes of underfunding is sheeted home as the responsibility of the providers, not the “funder” at the top.



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Until 2009, Geoff was a Senior Lecturer in Economics at Victoria University of Wellington. Since then he has been a Senior Associate at first the Institute for Policy Studies, and now at its successor the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies. He has a doctorate in Economics from Oxford University.



Should we revive the Ministry of Works?

“The original intent of the RMA has been eroded and subverted by the failure of successive Governments to lay down the national standards that were provided for in the legislation and that are required to guide planning decisions.”

In other settings such as infrastructure and prisons, the public-private contracting model is vulnerable to rent-seeking opportunism by the private sector parties.

In a crisis, the result is the spectacle of ministers and officials hyping up the effective action they are taking in terms of funding, but having to wait for delivery by others as resources trickle down to the front line workers through complex and often inefficient channels over which ministers do not have direct control.

The Public Service Act perpetuates, rather than fixes, these problems.

We would do better with a clear arrangement allowing professional providers the freedom to exercise their vocational skills and judgment to the best of their ability, within a unified nationwide institutional architecture where clear accountability for resourcing decisions lies at the centre and the buck stops with the Minister and his or her department, where it belongs.

That has implications for the organisation of the public service. With renewed responsibility, there would be a greater need for specialised departments staffed with and headed by professional experts faced with the right incentives, and with their in-house delivery capability.

In early April 2020, Shane Jones and Phil Twyford were publicly

considering reviving the former Ministry of Works, abolished in 1988, to enable Government itself to undertake the planning and construction of infrastructure projects, rather than having to rely on contracts or partnerships with private sector providers.

Until 1988, the old Ministry of Works and Development did the heavy lifting of infrastructure construction. It provided training and maintained regulatory standards across the construction sector. It was responsible for “town and country planning” and for providing Government with its own in-house body of skilled professional engineering advice.

The Ministry’s public reputation was tarnished in the late 1970s and early 1980s by its involvement with Rob Muldoon and Bill Birch’s Think Big projects, both because it operated the Town and Country Planning system that was hijacked by Think Big and because the sheer momentum of its hydroelectricity construction programme carried it into alarming cost overruns on the Rangipo and Clyde projects. But abolishing the entire Ministry in retribution was surely overkill of the most extreme kind.

The Ministry was dismembered in 1988, with its construction business converted to an SOE and its administrative and advisory functions dispersed around other departments.

Should we revive the Ministry of Works?



Treasury's determination to kill off a competing public sector empire threw away decades of accumulated experience, human capital, intellectual property, and organisational clout.

If indeed the Government establishes a new infrastructure construction agency properly staffed by practising engineers and planners, some checks and balances will be needed to ensure that politicians are not able to use the power of the State to simply roll over legitimate objections to big projects.

The original intent of the Resource Management Act (RMA) has been eroded and subverted by the failure of successive governments to lay down the national standards that were provided for in the legislation and that are required to guide planning decisions.

So if indeed the vision of a new public works department comes to fruition on the back of justified frustration with the contracting-out model and the opportunistic exploitation of public-private partnerships, it will be important not to take that as an opportunity to dilute even further the effectiveness of the RMA planning machinery. On the contrary, a robust State sector delivery vehicle calls for stronger accountability under a reinvigorated RMA. ❖



“The original intent of the Resource Management Act (RMA) has been eroded and subverted by the failure of successive governments...”



Reimagining Government



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2020 has been a year of startling change. The COVID-19 crisis is redefining the relationship between citizens and the State. Change that would previously have taken years is happening in a matter of days as governments around the world scramble to respond to challenges unlike anything we've witnessed in our lifetimes.

While nobody can be sure how the pandemic will play out, it is clear that many of the changes taking place within government and wider society will be long lasting. We are unlikely to return to our old ways of working. In fact, we have an historic opportunity to reimagine government for the better.

In some countries, such as New Zealand, the first acute phase of the crisis has passed. Consequently, people's attention is turning to the future we want to build together - including the role and nature of government. There are already a wide range of responses from governments in different countries so there is unlikely to be a single blueprint. However, the current crisis has highlighted three important themes that are likely to be of enduring importance.

Embracing real-world complexity

The challenges that government faces right now are highly complex. Almost all the major public policy challenges we face – such as

tackling intergenerational inequality, navigating the future of work, or responding to the climate crisis – are complex in nature.

For example, the COVID-19 crisis involves people at all levels of government, interacting with citizens and other organisations, in deeply interconnected ways. This means that decisions in one domain can have unpredictable effects elsewhere (for example, the way in which public health decisions have impacted on the airline industry). No single actor, including the government, is able to solve the problem alone.

Our current models of government are ill-suited to facing complex challenges. Information is often tightly held rather than being allowed to inform decisions throughout the system. The desire for senior figures to be seen as “in control”, and the demand for clear lines of accountability, belies the reality that outcomes are rarely the result of simple cause-effect relationships.

Reimagining Government



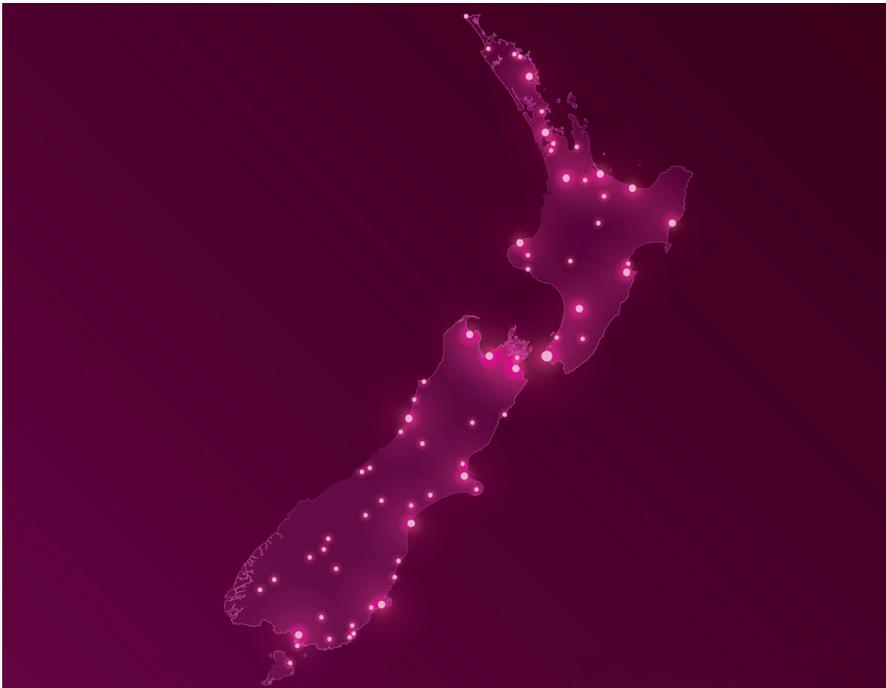
Nurturing our collective humanity and challenging injustice

The challenges of 2020 have both revealed our collective humanity, and identified ways in which swathes of our citizens feel systematically excluded from that collective feeling. On one hand, we have seen countless inspiring examples of friendship and empathy that have become the norm between neighbours, colleagues, and countries. The courage of many essential workers has been rightly recognised, as has their role providing human connection and compassion in the depths of the crisis.

On the other hand, the movement to challenge systematic injustice, inspired by Black Lives Matter, has revealed some of the most prominent obstacles that we face in building a sense of common humanity that is genuinely inclusive.

These simple human aspects, now revealed as fundamental, have been disregarded in our public systems for too long. The pursuit of efficiency and value-for-money has driven a reductionist logic that quantifies success in terms of inputs, outputs and outcomes – with the value of the human relationships, trust and other more qualitative aspects

“Our current models of government are ill-suited to facing complex challenges.”





Reimagining Government

“The public service ethos has dwindled as services have been disaggregated and outsourced.”

downplayed. The public service ethos has dwindled as services have been disaggregated and outsourced.

We now have the opportunity to build on this insight and reshape our public systems so that they adopt a more human approach from the outset. This focuses our minds on building public systems (ways for public services and citizens to collaborate effectively across boundaries) which recognise and respond to the variety of ways to be human and forge a shared public purpose from this variety.

Adopting a learning mindset

The challenges of 2020 have highlighted that the world is complex and uncertain. And yet within this uncertainty, governments still had to act. Through necessity they've adopted a learning mindset - a more agile, iterative approach, sharing information and learning along the way, in the knowledge that decisions taken today may well need to be adjusted tomorrow.

We need to adopt a learning mindset but often this runs counter to the understandable desire of politicians and policymakers to seek out big ideas that can provide long-term solutions. In reality, we often know less than we realise and

are more confident in our ability to “solve” problems than our track record suggests. The desire to build solutions at scale means that too often we end up failing at scale.

Rather than optimising for control (much of which is an illusion) we should optimise our public systems for learning. By celebrating the ability to fail fast and fail small, our health, education and welfare systems can rapidly learn - evolving and adapting over time as our collective understanding grows and as societal needs change.

Reimagining government

Our conversations so far in Aotearoa New Zealand have identified that the country has a significant progressive political agenda and wealth of grassroots community action, but that these things are being hampered by the public management tools of the last century, particularly outsourcing and management by targets.

There is an alternative. A range of public service bodies, governments, foundations and not-for-profits¹ have helped to outline an emerging new approach, called Human Learning Systems:²

Making public service more **Human**. The purpose of public service is to

1. <https://www.humanlearning.systems/partners/>

2. <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/human-learning-systems-complexity-friendly-approach-public-services/>

Reimagining Government



enable each and every person to lead a thriving life. This means that the future of public service is bespoke - it will respond to the particular strengths and needs of each person and community. Articulating this purpose focuses the attention of public servants on building relationships with those they serve – as it is only through these relationships that people’s particular strengths and needs can be known and acted on. This means liberating citizens and public servants from attempts to control their work from above, and instead focuses on building trust at all levels.

Creating continuous learning. In situations of uncertainty, we do not know what the ‘right’ thing to do is. There is no manual to operate from. So everyone must learn, as they go. It is the job of government and public servants of all types to create emergent learning environments and practices (Finland’s experimental approach is an interesting example of this³).

Nurturing healthy systems. Healthy systems produce good outcomes. So if we want good outcomes, it is the job of political and public service leaders to nurture systems

in which all citizens are heard, and in which different actors are able to learn, coordinate and collaborate effectively.

Once we acknowledge that the world is complex, we recognise that there is no such thing as a pre-existing blueprint for reimagined government which we can pull off the shelf, or which can be created in one place, and copied in another. Rather than looking for blueprints, each government must learn for themselves how they respond to the realities and challenges of complexity. The HLS approach offers a way to frame such an exploration.

Aotearoa New Zealand is an ideal place for this exploration because it is making significant strides in this direction. For example, the commitment to future generations made in the Living Standards Framework⁴ provides opportunities for rethinking approaches to wellbeing, and the proposed Public Service Reform programme⁵ is seeking to create more agile and adaptive public service. Would you be interested in helping to make this happen? If so, do get in touch.⁶ ❖

“Rather than looking for blueprints, each government must learn for themselves how they respond to the realities and challenges of complexity.”

3. <https://kokeilevasuomi.fi/en/key-project>

4. <https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

5. <https://ssc.govt.nz/our-work/reforms/>

6. Contact us at: thea@centreforpublicimpact.org



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Public Service Association
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

The PSA is New Zealand's largest union, representing over 70,000 workers in central government, state-owned enterprises, local councils, health boards and community groups.

We're proud of our history of sponsoring and publishing writing and thinking on the role and health of the state. Over the past two decades this has included:

- **Re-imagining Government – Putting people at the heart of New Zealand's Public Sector** (commissioned in 2006 from UK think tank Demos)
- **Reviving the Public – A new governance and management model for public services** (commissioned in 2006 from David Coats of the UK's Work Foundation)
- **The Chief Executive as Employer: Reinforcing the New Public Management Silos** (paper presented by G. Barclay & B. Pilott in 2008 at the After the Reforms conference)
- **State of the Future – strong public services for tough times** (published in 2009 in response to the global financial crisis)
- **Why We Need Public Spending** (commissioned in 2010 from David Hall of Greenwich University)
- **Modern Public Services** (policy paper series published in 2011)
- **Rethinking the State Sector Act** (published in 2014 in collaboration with the New Zealand Fabian Society)
- **Progressive Thinking: ten Perspectives on tax** (2017)
- **Progressive Thinking: ten Perspectives on housing** (2017)
- **Progressive Thinking: ten Perspectives on the future of work** (2018)



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