



Progressive Thinking:

Ten Possible Futures for Public & Community Services

Raising waka, and not just yachts

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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 in this brief note that making smarter investments in Iwi, in Māori institutions and in the Whānau Ora Commissioning agencies has the potential to both accelerate the nation's COVID-19 response while also ensuring COVID-19 does not raise inequality in the same way past pandemics have.

This note offers advice on how to improve service delivery to whānau, hapū and Māori by finding a balance between what worked before and what needs to happen to succeed in the 'next normal'. It does this by discussing what worked in the COVID-19 lockdown, what needs to be resolved, which attitudes and practices need to stop, and what must be accelerated right now. Before we jump to our advice, we offer our fundamental assumptions.

Previous pandemics have created income inequality

Our first assumption is COVID-19 will raise income inequality and depress the employment prospects of the vulnerable, including low-skilled and low-wage workers. This assumption is based on findings of a paper by Furceri, D., Loungani, P., Ostry, J.D. and Pizzuto, P on how previous pandemics create income inequality as well as the monthly updates issued by the International Labor Organisation (2020).

Involuntary job loss is a precursor for serious mental health events

Our second assumption is based on the work by Keefe, Reid, Ormsby, Robson, Purdie, Baxter, and Incorporated, N.K.I (2002). They examined the serious health events following involuntary job loss for meat processing workers in Whakatū, and found a link an increased risk of serious self-harm which led to hospitalisation or death.

Māori and the Māori economy will carry a disproportionate burden of the pandemic

Our third assumption is that while COVID-19 will have an unprecedented impact on the world, whānau, hapū and Māori and the Māori economy will carry a disproportionate burden of the pandemic in Aotearoa. This is due to where our workforce is positioned in the labour market; the myriad inequalities of both opportunity and outcome that already exist and the detrimental affect these have on our people; and the collective structure of the Māori asset base. This assumption



relies heavily on the work by Hillmare Schulze and Konrad Hurren for Tokana Te Raki and BERL (2020), as well as the work of Te Pūnaha Matatini in estimating the impact of COVID-19 on Māori and Pasifika populations (2020).

To return to pre-COVID-19 GDP levels the recovery 'shields'¹ need to include a deliberate, scaled and strenuous effort to protect the vulnerable

Our final assumption is that while the Government acted quickly to provide public health shields and is acting to provide economic stimulus to support the recovery, there is still an absence of any deliberate, scaled or strenuous effort to 'shield' the most vulnerable groups in our society from the impact of COVID-19. Without these 'shields', COVID-19 will end up exerting an adverse and sustained impact on inequality for generations to come.

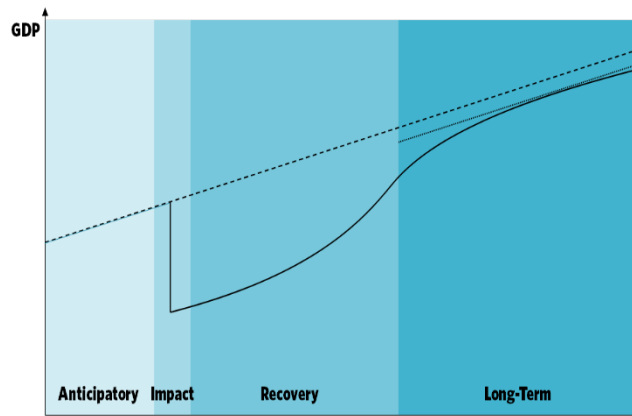


Figure One: Four stages for measuring the impact of a pandemic on GDP

Our assumption is based on the work by Douglas, J., Szeto, K. and Buckle, B., 2006. in modelling the effects of a potential pandemic on Aotearoa's macroeconomy (see Figure One). Our reading of that work, suggests we are between the anticipatory and impact stage of the pandemic, and that if GDP is to return to pre-COVID-19 levels, then we need to start seeing recovery 'shields' that enable a favourable long-term response to GDP - for everyone, not just the few. Our assumption about the specific recovery 'shields' for more vulnerable groups is that these shields represent the 'new normal', and require the Government to use the lessons from the past six months to reimagine how to partner with whānau, hapū and iwi – in creative and bold ways.

This note now moves to what some of those creative and bold elements might be. It covers what worked well during the lockdown, what needs to be resolved, what can be stopped, and what must be accelerated right now to transform policy and service delivery to whānau, hapū and Māori. The advice is based on a mix of published research, experience and observations from the lockdown.

The initial Māori response package got it right

As part of the lockdown, the Government developed a Māori response package which was focussed on supporting hard-to-reach and vulnerable whānau such as those who live mostly in remote areas, were kaumātua or were homeless at the time the pandemic struck. The initial focus of the package was on supporting health and social service providers to help whānau stay at home in order to break the chain of transmission of the virus. To support this package, a deliberate policy decision was

¹ We are using the concept of a 'sheild' in this context to explain public policy interventions that effectively and demonstrable combine the COVID-19 elimination strategy with the Government's plan for a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy.



made to take advantage of those institutions in Te Ao Māori best placed to deliver to whānau that the public service had, until that time, traditionally been unable or unwilling to provide for. 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. The response package also helped to establish regional hubs led by urban marae in Auckland and tribal collectives in the Northland, Bay of Plenty, East Coast, Hawkes Bay, Manawatū and the Whanganui/South Taranaki/Rangitīkei regions.

In addition, Māori Tourism, Poutama Trust and the Federation of Māori Authorities worked together to provide support and advice to Māori businesses throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. They reached over 600 firms, received over 2000 calls via their 0800 number, and provided technical information to businesses needing specific guidance.

While no formal evaluation of the “Maori response” has yet been conducted, what is known is, that through these Maori-led initiatives many whanau, 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. In many ways it shows the sort of handbrake the kawanatanga can be on rangatiratanga, when it is moving at its own pace and working in its own silos. This will come as no surprise to those who have read the Waitangi Tribunal’s numerous reports on contemporary claims.

Although early days, what appears to have worked well is flexible, shorter and more local decision-making chains; partners operating with a high-level of trust towards an agreed, high-level outcome and allowing funding to flow freely; and acceptance that by-Māori-for-Māori initiatives, programmes and responses works. Before the pandemic, the conventional wisdom was that decisions needed to be made in Wellington, by senior officials, based on a very particular process and set of evidence, and then officials will need to co-design the solutions with whānau.

While not discrediting these essential tools, it appears good decisions are also decentralised, less top-down, and less about command-and-control from Wellington. What seems to have worked is the initial response package allowed whānau, hapū, Iwi, marae and local Māori providers to make the day-to-day and week-to-week decisions.

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

This moves us to what must be resolved. For those of you who know us, it will come as no surprise that we believe Māori community health workers and Whānau Ora Navigators are an integral part of the health and social services workforce acting as the interface between the health, social services sector and whānau. 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.

Therefore, it is time to resolve the position of Māori community health workers and Whānau Ora Navigators, including giving them 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. 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. This includes workers in food and accommodation, building and construction as well as wholesale and retail trade. Such employees are especially vulnerable because, in a second or third wave, they have the least 'remote working' jobs in the labour market.

Even then, some workers are more vulnerable than others. Schulze and Hurren for Tokana Te Raki and BERL (2020) find that sixty-six per cent of Māori workers will 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. This matters to the Māori economy because a generation lost will amplify already existing intergenerational inequality.

It also matters to the Public Service Association (PSA) and its members. Some of the gains in gender equality that the PSA has helped secure could be undone. That is because women are disproportionately concentrated 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 child care and domestic chores. While the market provision of these services has been disrupted, women are more likely to try to work from home and take of whānau and their hapū responsibilities (Statistics New Zealand, 2011).

This brings us to what must be stopped. 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 as well as those employees who work part-time.





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

This brings us nicely to what can be accelerated. We would both 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 picture (in somewhat kinder words than those used in the Waitangi Tribunal's health outcomes report of 2019), of a vision of progress and positive changes for the whānau and families who engage with the Whānau Ora agencies.

Sadly, however, the review found a public service and senior leadership who were vigorously passive so as to ensure mainstream agencies did not adopt whānau-centred approaches or understand the positive outcomes being delivered by the Whānau Ora agencies. The report also noted the problematic compliance the Whānau Ora agencies were subjected to.

We believe its time to accelerate the use of whānau-centred approaches in policy and for mainstream agencies to start supporting Whānau Ora agencies. This is not at the expense of Iwi and Māori health and social services provision. The providers who were effective during the COVID-19 lockdown should also be supported.

Noting that most of the public policy capability now resides in the private sector, tertiary institutes and community sector, we believe the public service needs to rethink its approach to developing its Māori workforce. On the one hand, it cannot keep expecting its Māori staff to do all the heavy lifting. Nor can it assume Māori public servants and Māori consultants will do work for free. On the other hand, it cannot build a Māori workforce overnight. The public service will need to find new ways to include the voice of Māori policy advisors at the table, without expecting to employ them directly. It will also need to make the public service a much more attractive place for rangatahi to work and stay.

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. However, alongside this move towards by-Māori-for-Māori and Whānau Ora service delivery models, 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 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 to public servants, especially senior officials, 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 Maori society; fluency in te reo Māori; an equity analysis.

While this is a tough and complex challenge that will require all senior officials to play a sustained part over the long term, it is critically important the public service drives home the idea that achieving equity in access, opportunities and outcomes for Māori is not controversial – and is indeed among the ultimate purpose of any just public management system, let alone one that derives its existence from the Treaty of Waitangi.

Summary

It is hard to believe that Aotearoa can go back to its old normal. Business owners are already examining how to keep the positive associated with remote working while maintaining a small office or front counter presence. Entertainment event managers are developing new online channels. 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, canoe, 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 kawanatanga 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 also 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 are in Tipu Mātoro ki te Ao (2018) in the first instance, and the Waitangi Tribunal's health outcomes report (2019) in the second.

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