

**COUNCILLOR PATERSON**  
**REPORT:**  
**2023 LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE**  
**‘SUPERLOCAL 23 – LOUDER LOCAL LEADERSHIP’**  
**Ōtautahi/Christchurch**  
**26-28 July 2023**

I attended the 2023 LGNZ Conference in Ōtautahi/Christchurch from the afternoon of Wednesday 26 July through to the Conference Dinner and LGNZ SuperLocal Awards on Friday 22 July. The full conference programme can be viewed here: <https://www.lgnzconference.co.nz/programme>. (NB: This report is a brief outline of key points that I will cover in more detail, when presenting to the Council meeting)

**Observations on any of the following sessions:**

**Day 1 – 26 July**

**Conference Opening: Mihi Whakatau (4.30pm)**

We heard from the Mayor of Christchurch, Phil Major who extolled the attributes of the new Te Pae Convention Centre, along with the progress the city has made since the earthquake. Following that, the newly elected President of LGNZ, SAM BROUGHTON, introduced himself. Sam is the Mayor of Selwyn, now in his third term. The population of the district has doubled since he came to office in 2010, from 40,000 to 80,000 people in 2023...which certainly presents a range of challenges. He believes in “investment today for our future. A bit of pain now in order to gain for the next generation.” An example of that Kaupapa is the 8000 sqm “Selwyn Sports Centre” (opened in 2021 at a cost of \$21.5 Million) to provide locals of all ages with a multitude of ways to stay healthy all-year round.

Sam sees the Future for Local Government review as a priority for the sector and believes its critical for us to reach a consensus position, in order to be ready to engage with the incoming Government *by the end of this year*.



**Welcome Reception (5.30pm)**

Mix ‘n mingle opportunity in the Foyer of Te Pae. Deputy Mayor Kai Fong introduced me to a number of attendees from various areas where we discussed topics of interest. I also connected with one of our post-election induction facilitators, Dr. Steven Finlay.

## Day 2 – 27 July

### **Breakfast – Through the looking glass – a glimpse into the future with Frances Valentine (7.30am)**

I chose to attend this in the hope that it would highlight exciting opportunities and new technologies that we may be able to adopt for the benefit of our Community.

While the theme of her presentation was centred on the massive change we are undergoing globally...it wasn't what I'd call 'positive.' In fact, it was pretty confronting.

Frances started with a section from a global trends report prepared for the **President of the United States** (*published every four years since 1997 by the National Intelligence Council*) This particular report was published in **December of 2012** and was the intelligence community's best assessment of critical drivers and global scenarios out to 2030. This highlighted potential "Black Swan Events" (*an event that comes as a surprise, has a major effect, and is often inappropriately rationalized after the fact with the benefit of hindsight*) including:

**Severe Pandemic** ✓

**Much more rapid Climate Change** ✓

**Unstable Europe** ✓

**Issues with China and Iran** ✓

**Cyber Attacks** ✓

**Nuclear War** ??????

As we know, a number of these "Black Swan Events" predicted in 2012 *have already occurred* OR are in the process of happening.

Other topics she covered crystallised many pieces of information I had read about in various media and 'connected the dots' to paint a less than rosy picture of what lies ahead...and, what's happening RIGHT NOW.

The changes were summed up as:

**Demographic Change** – an aging population coupled with falling birth rates (also known as "Hyper-Aging" which I have raised with Council, previously)

**Climate Change** – Hundreds of Millions of people are projected to be displaced by increasing temperatures (as seen in Europe, the US & South America-July the hottest month EVER in history) and rising sea levels. These 'Climate Refugees' will need new lands and Aotearoa NZ is one of the countries highlighted as a 'safe haven.' She referred to the UK and Japan as having much larger populations (UK-67.33 Million & Japan-125.7 Million) and manage their resources to suit.

Frances went on to say that in terms of WHO we should open our borders to, *Pasifika* would be most likely to integrate well, given NZ already has over 380,000 living here. She also pointed out that while the birth rates of many of the world's economic power houses are falling, Indigenous peoples are not showing the same drop so these new immigrants could fill the void of younger workers Aotearoa needs now and in to the future, as our current population ages.

My concerns about this future are:

- We can't house the people we already have NOW and our infrastructure is just as inadequate ...even if we started building NOW to accommodate an influx of hundreds of thousands of climate refugees (if not MILLIONS) we wouldn't be ready. (*you only have to look at Auckland's inner city rail project to see that*)
- Do we really WANT that massive injection of people in Aotearoa-NZ? Is that the right decision to make for *OUR* mokopuna?

**Technology Change** - This is where change is happening the fastest.

- **The rise of Artificial Intelligence:** AI systems have become increasingly important as AI is being integrated into various critical domains, such as healthcare, finance, autonomous vehicles and defence, where decisions made by AI algorithms can have significant real-world consequences. An example of how fast this technology is moving, is Chat GPT. The first edition, GPT1 could access 117 Million datasets. Just 3 generations later, GPT4 - can access 1 TRILLION datasets. What does that mean in application? (*from an OpenAI Technical Report*) “GPT-4 exhibits human-level performance on various professional and academic benchmarks, including passing a simulated bar exam with a score around the top 10% of test takers.”
- **The Power of Tech Companies:** From Google and Amazon to Apple and Microsoft, every major tech company is dedicating resources to breakthroughs in artificial intelligence. Apple added **\$71 billion to its market value** after news that it’s been secretly building an ‘Apple GPT’ to rival OpenAI. Governments across the globe are rushing to implement legislation to protect the interests of their people in order to try and maintain some form of control of this rapidly changing technology...but it may already be too late. Incidentally, Aotearoa NZ currently DOES NOT have policy to protect our people from the threat posed by AI.
- **Decentralised digital identity:** (DDI) is a self-sovereign and user-centric approach to managing digital identities. In traditional systems, individuals' identities are centralised and controlled by governments, or corporations. This centralised approach can lead to issues of privacy, security, and lack of user control over their personal data. (*Data hacking is rapidly rising and NZ has felt the impact of this criminal activity eg; Waikato DHB*) DDI gives individuals ownership and control over their personal data. They can decide what information to share, with whom, and for what purposes. Personal data is the GOLD of the future.

### President’s Address (9.10am)

Sam Broughton shared more of his background. Currently resides in Darfield and comes from a rural background, with his family coming to NZ in the 1850’s.

Before he became involved in Local Government, he was a Youth Worker. He believes in doing and saying things that “build each other up, not tear each other down.”

He is excited about his new role and sees this time of great change as an opportunity, rather than a threat. Sam *“believes in Long Term Planning and thinking about the future for our children, grandchildren and generations to come... If we are going to make Aotearoa NZ a better place over the next 30 years, then what we do next week, and next month, actually needs to take us in that direction. Let’s keep our eyes on where we want to go & we do that best, when we do it together. If we are going to move forward, we know the Government is up for conversations as REGIONS...and so how we get to a regional discussion is going to be part of our journey over the next few months...so the challenge of coming together is going to be difficult and interesting... how are we going to think about getting together as a region, to have meaningful partnership with (central) government?*

*The way that we are working (now) isn’t sustainable for all of us moving forward.*

*The status quo isn’t an option.”*

### Te Maruata Address (9.25am)

As Councillor Kereopa was directly involved, I will defer to her

### Decision making for the future – lessons from Sophie Howe (9.40am)

This session was just the tonic I needed after the dire predictions explored over breakfast! Sophie Howe has been described as “the world’s first Minister of the Unborn.” She’s recently retired from her role providing advice to the Welsh Government & Public Sector on delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being for current and FUTURE GENERATIONS. Prior to that, Sophie was the first Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner for South Wales and also served as a County Councillor in Cardiff, elected at 21...the youngest elected member in Wales. This session also touched AI, Climate Change and the Ageing Population.

In her role as “Commissioner for Future Generations” Sophie was instrumental in the passing of the “WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT” which established in LAW seven “National Well-Being Goals” *Prosperous. Resilient. Healthier. More Equal. Cohesive Communities. Vibrant Culture & thriving Welsh Language. Globally Responsive....* along with the steps to achieve this.

She also made it her mission to engage with youth to understand their concerns for today and the future, which Sophie summed up via a quote from Loyle Carner, an English hip hop musician... **“Never has so much been lost by so many, because of the inaction of so few.”**

In terms of applying those concerns to policy, the law recognised that “*Public Bodies should seek to ensure that they meet today’s needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*” (very similar to “make Mokopuna decisions” - but enshrined in law)

One of the steps to achieving the “7 National Well-Being Goals” was the establishment of their “PUBLIC SERVICES BOARDS” whose role it is, is to work in partnership with their “COMMUNITY COUNCILS” conduct well-being assessments of their local Community, create a Well-Being Plan and then take Collective Action. This resonated with me as it has similarities to RLC’s partnership with the Tatau Pounamu Collective which resulted in the creation of the “Eastside Community Wellness Plan.” The major difference being in Wales, collaboration with Community Boards is mandatory...not optional.

Sophie Howe’s presentation also demonstrated the power that “LOCALISM” has to connect Communities and improve the lives of our people, not just for today, but for future generations. While relationships with Central Government (especially for resources) are important, so much more can be achieved at the sharp end when Communities collaborate to achieve common goals. She finished with a rather apt quote: **“Great people have always encountered opposition from mediocre minds”** (and systems) **So keep going.....** (Einstein)



### Young Elected Member Address (10.30am)

As Mayor Tapsell was part of the Young Elected Members hui, I will defer to her insights on this.



### Breakout Session: Sport NZ – How active are our Communities? (12 Noon)

Sport NZ is investing \$4.3 million into a project to help councils across Aotearoa highlight the value of play for tamariki and whānau wellbeing. The investment includes creating 18 new **Local Play Advocate** roles inside local councils over the next 4 years. Sport NZ will fund each role for 2 years. The first cohort of the Local Play Workforce Project is up and running, with roles placed in councils in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Gisborne and Christchurch.

(NB: *Rob Pitkethley indicated at the IAE Committee meeting that RLC would be included in the second tranche*)

**Louise Van Tongeren, Play Advocate at Christchurch City Council** facilitated the session.

She highlighted that participation in organised sport dropped by 3% due to Covid-19 and hasn't recovered. E-gaming is also competing for youth leisure time. Research shows that for every \$1 invested in Sport or Physical Activity, it yields a \$2 ROI.

Play is the easiest way for tamariki to stay active and is a vital component in their physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. Play allows tamariki to experience fun and freedom and gives them the opportunity to learn to solve problems, get creative, face new challenges, and create new friendships. They get to build the attitudes, skills and life-long love of being active.

“Play is about much more than playgrounds; play can take place everywhere.”

She gave examples of how neighbourhoods with no real green space can have walkways/thoroughfares adapted to include simple structures for kids to climb on...drains that can be made safer to have play adventures in, through to parks that are devoid of expensive equipment being enhanced by inexpensive BUT CREATIVE items like old telephone poles cut into rounds to make pathways, etc. In any given week she can be consulting with the community development team or with a stormwater engineer. She looks at all the different ways the Council impacts play and to advocate for play in every element of city life. Louise explained that she works with their Transport team to improve outdoor spaces to make walking and scootering to school more appealing.

### Breakout Session: Willis Bond – Civic Centres reimaged: How Tauranga City Council is revitalising the heart of Aotearoa's fifth largest city. (1pm)

Over 4 years ago, Tauranga City Council embarked on a journey to reimagine the city's heart. Together with development partner Willis Bond, it endorsed an integrated masterplan that aims to deliver a new civic whare (public meeting space), museum, library and community hub, an exhibition gallery, and landscaping linking the civic precinct to the nearby waterfront reserve, as well as a hotel, performing arts venue and conference centre.

In addition, Willis Bond is developing New Zealand's largest mass timber office building in Tauranga's city centre, which will become the Council's new civic administration hub.

TCC's Council's Chief Executive, Marty Grenfell, shared the Council's perspective on the project — where it started, the masterplan, how it engaged with mana whenua and the wider community, and the benefits of partnering with Willis Bond.

Willis Bond's Managing Director (Funds & Finance) Wayne Silver, shared what drew Willis Bond to the project, what benefits it believes it adds, and how the public sector can deliver better value for communities through successful partnership with the private sector.

The part of Wayne Silver's presentation that grabbed my attention was his reference to a book entitled “How Big Things Get Done” - by Oxford professor Bent Flyvbjerg, dubbed “the world's leading megaproject expert.” Given we were about to embark on our own ‘megaproject’ (the restoration of Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa) the information shared was startling:

Out of more than **16,000** projects from 20-plus different fields in 136 countries, **only 8.5 percent of projects hit the mark on both cost and time**. Or, to put that another way, **91.5 percent of projects go over budget, over schedule, or both**.

### Prime Minister's Address: Rt Hon Chris Hipkins (3pm)

Given the theme of the Conference being "Localism" and that there were approximately 750 Local Government representatives from across the Motu (and media) in the auditorium, I would have expected the PM to take advantage of that opportunity and deliver a message targeted at **US**, as well as launch some major type of new policy. He didn't.

There was no mention of how he planned to increase funding to Local Government to enable us to achieve better outcomes for our Communities...no "carrots" to win our support. Instead, it was just a platform for him to try and convince us that their time in power has been a success and that their policies (3 Waters/10 Waters?) are what Aotearoa NZ needs.

Disappointing.

### Our Journey to Balance – Ōtautahi Christchurch (3.15pm)

Presented by Christchurch City Councillor, Tyler Harrison-Hunt. Unlike the previous speaker, this was delivered with plenty of passion & creativity and included a mix of music, imagery and interpretive dance performed by local artists.

Tyler told the story of Ōtautahi/Christchurch "coming together to reimagine itself as a place of opportunity for all...A new story is developing... one that recognises the heritage of our settler culture and the Mana Whenua of our Ngai Tahu Hapu, Ngāi Tūāhuriri...the ancestor said *Care for your people* and those values helped our design teams to envisage our new future: *Whakapapa* – Our Identity. *Mana Motuhake* – Our Independence & Autonomy. *Manaakitanga* – Charity and our Faith. Our journey is one that is seeking balance, where people find time and space to play, to innovate, and to dream...to think about our future generations. We care about not just what we do, but how we do it."

The presentation included 3 case studies of how Local Government has partnered with the Community to embrace their rich cultural heritage, grow their economy and embrace their diverse Communities.

I will expand on this further at the Council Meeting.



### **Inaugural SuperLocal Political Debate (4pm)**

Featured representatives from a number of political parties, moderated by Mark Jennings, Founder of the media platform “Newsroom” and was responsible for launching “Newshub” across TV Three and Radio Live.

The representatives were:

ACT – Simon Court.

Green – Eugenie Sage.

Labour – Dr Tracey McLellan.

National – Simon Watts.

NZ First – Jamie Arbuckle

Te Pati Maori – invited but DNS.

My impression was the representatives from ACT, the Greens and National actually prepared for the audience they were going to be in front of.

They mostly knew their subject matter and, on the whole, actually answered questions, rather than just deflect or regurgitate party policy.

To their credit, National sent Simon Watts, their spokesperson for Local and Regional Government.



### **It's a Wrap – the debate dissected (5pm)**

Mark Jennings carried on his role as moderator and sought feedback from a panel of Local Body representatives including 4 Mayors and co-founder of Newsroom, Jonathan Milne.

Overall, their verdict was that none of the Party Representatives took the opportunity to address the issues of concern to Local Government...especially increased funding.



### Day 3 – 28 July

#### **Address from Leader of the Opposition: Christopher Luxon (9.10am)**

My impression was that someone was in the audience the previous day for the SuperLocal Political Debate and the subsequent panel discussion, and they briefed Chris Luxon on what took place. He addressed many of the points raised *with the exception of increasing the funding for Local Government*.

The point that struck a chord for me the most was his comment around Infrastructure Project Funding. He stated that there will be a fund established for REGIONAL projects (*which reinforces the point raised earlier by LGNZ President, Sam Broughton about 'Regional Partnerships' being the way forward*) that will be established within 2 months after the election and allocated to those plans that can deliver the best outcome/have the most impact, on a “first-in, first-served” basis. So...we need to identify the project that will benefit Rotorua AND our neighbours (BOPRC? Whakatane? Kawerau?) and partner to have something ready to present, should a change in Government come to pass.





### Fireside chat on Managed Retreat in Practice (9.30am)

This session was one of the highlights of the day for me, given the situation we find our selves in with our high Lake levels and the impact that is having on sections of our Community.

The guest speakers were Jamie Simmonds (an American/Australian) and Renata Hakiwai from Omāhu Marae, near Fernhill, Hastings. Both shared incredible stories of their experiences of flooding and how they rose to the challenge of 'Managed Retreat.'

**Jamie's story:** On the 10th of January, a deluge hit already saturated ground across South-East Queensland, with the epicentre being the Lockyer Valley region and the small town of Grantham. The Grantham community, led by Mayor Steve Jones, partnered with Jamie to create and direct the 'Strengthening Grantham Project', an ambitious undertaking that would offer devastated residents a chance to relocate to higher ground ***less than one year from the flood*** that ravaged the region.

**Renata Hakiwai's story:** The marae and around 50 houses were flooded in the small Hastings settlement of Omāhu, inundated from floodwaters after the banks of the Ngaruroro River were breached...the last time that occurred was 1988 during Cyclone Bola. Being a small community, they don't have the resources of Queensland Government nor the funding, however, their people benefit from the foresight of their Tupuna who set aside the land that contains their original Pa, Puketapu. Renata is part of team that is working on a plan to relocate their Community to the Pa. Not all of the residents want to move, which is part of the challenge...along with working within funding constraints and legislation.



### LGNZ Chief Executive address: Susan Freeman-Greene (10.40am)

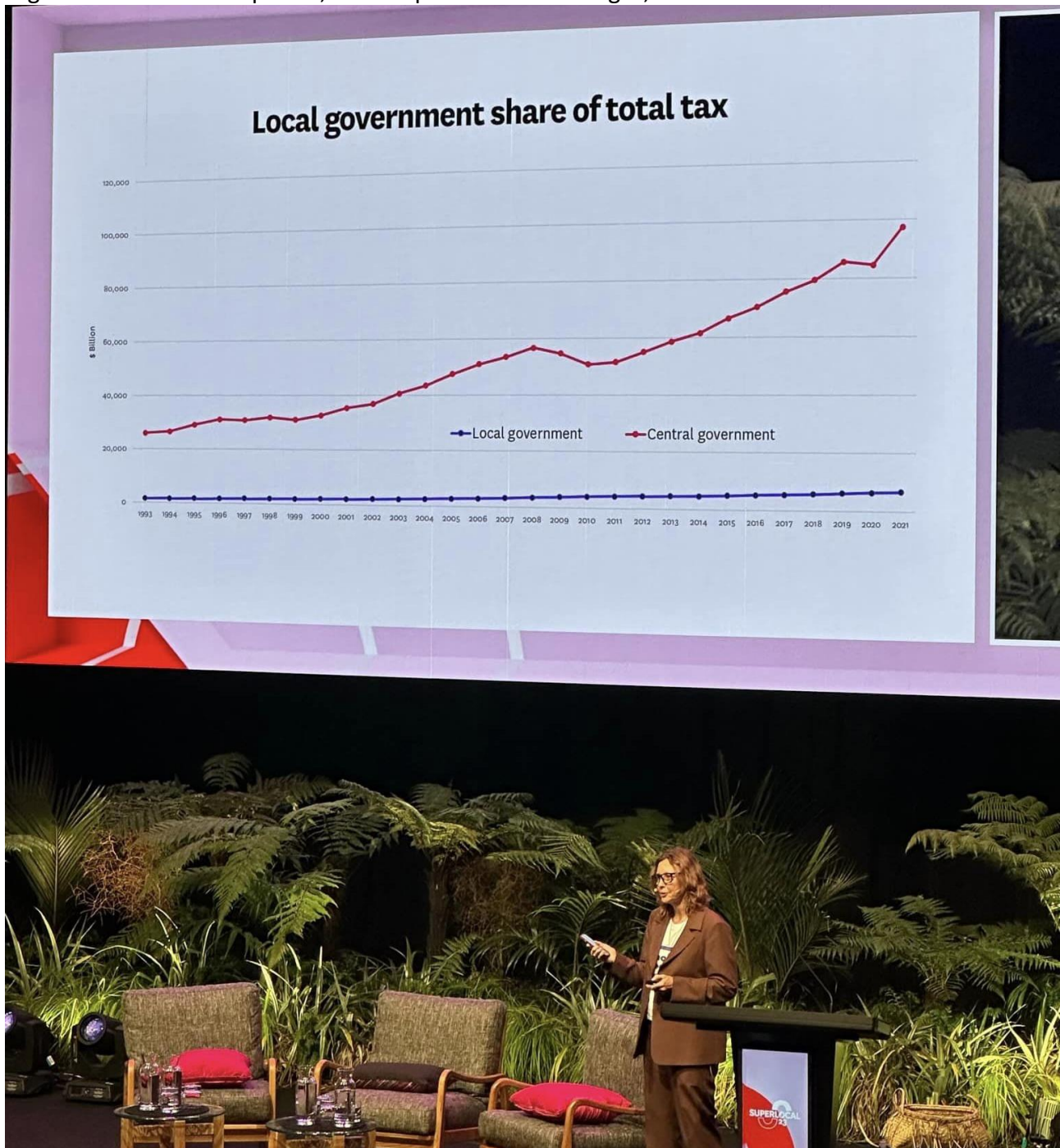
The question was posed “What do we stand for?”

The Future for Local Government review has given us a platform: now we need to own & drive our future – a future BY Local Government.

Choosing LOCALISM is about doing just that.

It’s about building up our Communities (as per Sophie Howe’s earlier presentation) and giving THEM a say in THEIR FUTURE. (eg: Tatau Pounamu Collective) The chance for THEM to come up with solutions to THEIR issues.

It’s about LOCAL DEMOCRACY. It’s a challenge to us to realise the future we want to create, together. We have the power, and in spite of the challenges, we CAN drive our own future!





## The Big Question – What is SuperLocal? A Panel on Reimagining Local Government (12pm)

Moderator - Rohan O'Neill-Stevens (Deputy Mayor Nelson City Council) with panellists, Tara Moala (Tamaki Regeneration Company) Helmut Modlik (Te Runanga o Te Rangatira) Caren Rangi (Arts Council of NZ) and Horowhenua District Council Mayor, Bernie Wanden.

I found this particularly interesting...

A question was posed:

*“We’ve obviously seen the devastation caused by Cyclone Gabrielle, and one of the things we always see in those times of crisis is Communities coming together incredibly strongly and responding as a collective. But one of the things we also see is after those events often that drops away...how do we create those stronger Community ties on a permanent basis?”*

Helmut Modlik (pictured below) responded “...only those who have intact **Social Infrastructure** are able to be connected and drawn on...in our land, examples of course are, Iwi, our Pasifika Churches, lovely little towns like in the Horowhenua, where there is STILL intact **Social Infrastructure**...all you city folk, you’re toast, eh? (audience laughed) When it all turns to custard, everyone’s looking around for Rotary? No, I don’t think so. When the floods come, when there’s an earthquake, where do they go? To the Marae, to the school, to the people who’ve got **Social Infrastructure**.

I will elaborate on this subject more at the Council meeting.





### Transporting our communities in the future panel (1pm)

Moderator – Penny Hulse with panellists, Dean Kimpton (CEO Auckland Transport), Brad Olsen (Infometrics) and Mayor Alex Walker (Central Hawkes Bay District Council)

Another interesting discussion. It covered a range of issues – funding or, UNREALISTIC funding to achieve IMPOSSIBLE outcomes, was one... but the standout for me was the subject of how **health & safety requirements have gone too far**. As example was given that during the Auckland floods, in Karikari, residents who were cut off had a local contractor who happened to own the equipment needed to fix the problem...Auckland Council couldn't get there, so the people of that Community took action, themselves. Auckland Transport didn't throw their hands up in horror and admitted, they had done a good job in repairing the road. The Moderator asked Dean Kimpton "...how can we help ameliorate the 'Red Cone Mentality' and do this safely?" He responded saying "I don't think it's a sustainable road maintenance approach, but when we need it, of course. That's awesome!" He went on to add "...on safety and risk appetite, there is a conversation to be had as Community around what level of risk we're willing to accept...I think we've got increasing conservatism...it feels like sometimes it's safety at any cost. I do wonder if we have to get this right than where we are...safety is not the question...but even I'm affronted by the number of cones sometimes...**we currently spend 15% of all of our Capital Projects on cones and road safety**...it's a real number...I feel like we have lost the balance...**how do we deliver safe environments for our people...at a fair cost?**"



### Address from Minister for Local Government: Hon Kieran McAnulty (3pm)

As with Prime Minister Hipkins address, this was a wasted opportunity to address the 'elephant in the room' (Local Government funding from Central Government) which wasn't taken.

Disappointing.

### Abbas Nazari: From Afghanistan to Aotearoa (3.20pm)

One of the highlights of the Conference.

When the Taliban first came to power back in 2001, Abbas Nazari's parents were faced with a choice: stay and face persecution in their homeland, or seek security for their young children elsewhere.

His story of their family's happy life in their small village being upended and forced to take a harrowing journey from the mountains of Afghanistan to a small fishing boat in the Indian Ocean, crammed with more than 400 other asylum seekers, was heart rending...*and inspiring*.

After 8 days aboard their boat, the Palapa, it started to sink. Luckily, they were saved by a Norwegian cargo ship, the Tampa. However, Australia closed its doors to these asylum seekers and they were forced to stay at sea for weeks, with many suffering from disease, along with women in the late stages of pregnancy. Approximately 150 people, including Abbas and his family, were diverted to New Zealand, where they were subsequently granted asylum and progressed to full citizenship.

One of Abbas' funny memories of his early life in Christchurch was of playing rugby with his friend who lived in the same street...said he taught his mate everything...that mate is Richie Mo'unga.



### President's wrap (4pm)

Sam Broughton re-capped the highlights of the 3 days and re-emphasised the importance of LOCALISM.



### Conference Dinner and LGNZ SuperLocal Awards (6.30pm)

**The SuperLeader Award Sponsored by Martin Jenkins** - This award is for an exceptional elected member who leads by example. **Winner** - Mayor Tim King from Tasman District Council, celebrated for his consistent commitment to the wellbeing of his community and his forward-thinking approach to leadership.

**The SuperCollab Award Sponsored by Kāinga Ora** - This award is about extraordinary teamwork or partnership. **Winner** - Hastings District Council's "Kuhu mai project"

**Finalist:** Rotorua Lakes Council: Rotorua Housing Accord collaborative partnership

**The SuperIdea Award Sponsored by Waka Kotahi** - This award is all about thinking outside the box. **Winner** - South Wairarapa District Council for their sustainable Dog Pound project

**The SuperEngaged Award** - This award is about exceptional engagement.

**Winner-** Christchurch City Council its Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan Public Engagement Platform

**Finalist:** Rotorua Lakes District Council: Pukehangi Heights Stormwater Management Plan - Mana Whenua Engagement



### Final reflections

In my opinion...The overall "SuperLocal" theme to this Conference was well chosen.

Building stronger Communities (*as per Sophie Howe's presentation*) can only be done by engaging with our people at a LOCAL level. That's face to face, on the ground, where our people live.

Not by a Regional or National Body making decisions from somewhere far away.

More decisions need to be made at a local level – and Central Government needs to put more trust (and funding!) in US to deliver the things OUR communities need.

However, we also can't ignore that relationships, with our Regional Partners and Central Government, are vital for delivering Infrastructure Projects and setting strategies that will benefit future generations.