

International Safe Community Designation for Rotorua.

'International Safe Communities' is a World Health Organisation (WHO) model for local communities to address safety initiatives through the building of local partnerships.

In order to be designated as an International Safe Community, communities are required to meet six criteria developed by the WHO Collaborating Centre on Community Safety. Designation is seen as a nationally and internationally recognised framework for a sustainable and planned approach towards a safer community.

In October 2005, Dr Carolyn Coggan from the Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand visited Rotorua to introduce the concept. Representatives from a range of organisations attended the session and heard about the aims and benefits for communities involved in the programme.

In Rotorua, safety activities have been occurring in a partly coordinated manner, and there is anecdotal evidence of gaps or duplication of effort and resources.

Rotorua made a commitment to pursue Safe Community designation in 2008 with support from local service providers and government agencies.

The partners for this project in Rotorua are: Rotorua District Council, ACC, Police, Lakes District Health Board, Castlecorp, Work & Income/MSD, Toi te Ora, Iwi representatives, Neighbourhood Support and Te Waiariki Pūrea Trust.

Support for safety projects has been further heightened by the Nia Glassie case and a desire from the broader community to take action towards a safer community, particularly regarding family violence. This impetus lends itself well to the WHO model of working

In late 2008 a project plan was developed which included the following vision, mission and values:

Vision:

'Rotorua is a safe and caring community where people, and the environment, are valued and respected'

Mission:

Planned approaches towards achieving sustainable improvements in safety, in our community.

Values:

- Community and people focused – respectful, and holistic e.g. healthy housing

- Transparency of systems, and processes
- Partnership
- Sustainable

The project formally commenced with the appointment of a project leader in February 2009 and the aim is to achieve designation by June 2010.

The accreditation process involves an audit by a panel of experts who consider amongst a range of other criteria the work to date and impacts within that community, systems and processes in place and extent of community engagement.

The benefits to communities of WHO Safe Community Designation include:

- improvements in social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of residents
- reduction in injury burden and cost of health care in New Zealand
- appeal to both national and international travellers
- potential improvements in the quality of life for New Zealanders through reduced injuries and deaths, and improved productivity.

For more information please contact the Safe Community Designation Leader at Rotorua District Council, Amy Royston. on 07 350 0209 ext 8172 or email amy.royston@rdc.govt.nz.

Or visit the Safe Communities Foundation website: www.safecommunities.co.nz.