Community Boards

An update

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Background
History

> Local government reform 1989 established:
  • 87 City, district and regional councils
  • 159 community boards
> Today there are 110 communities boards in 40 councils
> Maximum number of boards in a council = 8

Rationale

> To provide distinct communities with representation and voice?
> To reduce opposition to amalgamation?
Since 1989

> Elected and appointed (only councillors can be appointed)
> Legislation amended in 2002 to ensure appointed members are less than half the total number of members
  • Can be established the Local Government Commission (LGC) during a reorganisation
  • By community petition and poll
  • By council during 6 year representation review (or disestablished)
Structure and membership

> Makeup of boards
  * 4 - 12 members
  * Appointed members cannot be a majority
  * Chair elected by members

> Status
  * Not a local authority
  * Not a committee of a local authority
Members receive annual salary based on population size, as their primary role is seen as representation of community interests. For example:

- Wallacetown $1,376 pa (est. pop. 400)
- Waihi beach $4,444 pa (est. pop. 1,935)
- Spreydon Cashmere $23,155 (est. pop 60,000)

Chief executive required to provide administrative support, but varies considerably (poor cousin in many places).
Role
The statutory role

> Represent, and act as an advocate for the interests of its community;

> Consider and report on all matters referred to it by the territorial authority, or any matter of interest or concern to the community board;

> Maintain an overview of services provided by the territorial authority within the community.
Statutory Role (Cont)

- Prepare an annual submission to the territorial authority for expenditure within the community;
- Communicate with community organisations and special interest groups within the community;
- Undertake any other responsibilities that are delegated to it by the territorial authority
Decision-making?

> Councils can delegate all powers except:
  • the employment of staff
  • the ownership of property
  • the setting of rates

Options

> Delegate decision-making?
> Advisory role only?
> Power to recommend?
Service delivery in councils with community boards

- Advisory: 50.2%
- Council only: 33.5%
- Decision-making: 11.8%
- n/a: 13.5%
Proposed Nelson/Tasman community boards (2010)

In 2013 the LGC proposed the amalgamation of Nelson City and Tasman District which included community boards (option dismissed by voters). Proposed board functions included:

- Allocating grants to community groups
- Governance of local amenities e.g. museum/public halls
- Granting local leases in reserves
- Approving traffic control measures
- A broad range of community planning powers
Voice & representation
Community board Executive committee

- Established 1998
- Six members elected post election for 3 year terms (co-opted members (youth, Maori))
- Geographical representation
- Elect their chairs
- LGNZ provides advisory support and funding for four meetings
- Voluntary levy on each board to fund projects
Roles

> Biannual conference
> Advise LGNZ
> Good practice awards
> Recognition of outstanding CB service
> Represent boards interests to Minister of Local Government
> Support boards in disputes with parent councils
> Training in response to need (Chairs, support staff)
> Guidance material
> Standard templates
Enhancing the model?

2010 Local boards introduced for new Auckland Council.

> Local boards
  - Non-regulatory activities delegated by Auckland Council e.g. libraries
  - Ability to propose bylaws and targeted rates
  - Mandatory planning role and annual funding agreements
  - Established in legislation

> Community boards
  - Matters delegated by the governing body
  - Subject to 6 year reviews

In 2012 the LGC given power to establish local boards in unitary councils – none have been established so far.
Performance
Best Practice for Community Boards

Biannual awards emphasise engagement, leadership and community enhancement. Entries to the 2019 conference included:

- Process to engage community members in the re-development of a major reserve in Hanmer, North Canterbury;
- The organisation of an “e-waste” collection day;
- Facilitating the installation of security cameras on roads in a remote rural area;
- Establishing a “Junior Council” in a local primary school to work with council officers on environmental and traffic issues.
The Objective was to turn a dysfunctional recreational area in Kaeo into an area the town could be proud of and which could be enjoyed by the community and visitors alike.

Priorities were not only the need for new playground equipment but also the need to do something about the public toilets and provide facilities for families had to be added.
Public Toilet Mural Revamp
Lessons
Key factors in performance

> Relationships
  • To governing body & communities

> Resourcing
  • How much are they funded and in what way

> Information flow
  • Are boards in the information loop or not?

Board satisfaction with relationships
Issues

> Elected or not
  • How important is the democratic mandate?

> Uncertainty
  • Reviewed every 6 years

> Optimum role
  • provider or enabler/facilitator
Future prospects

> Unlikely to be replaced by local boards

> Government reform of the 3 waters may result in consolidation and increase in community boards

> LGNZ’s localism initiative encourages councils to think locally.
“It is clear that community boards do make a difference. They keep the local in local. They help councils deal with diversity in their communities. They provide both sources and lines of communication. And they provide for citizen involvement in the making of local policy” (Kerry Marshall President LGNZ 1997)
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