

**Report to LGMA Board - International Manager Exchange Programme 2019 / 20**  
**SOLGM New Zealand - Whangarei District Council**

You know it is going to be a good trip when you are called to board first at the Brisbane International Airport. This stroke of good fortune set the scene for what was an extremely memorable and educational exchange.

The first stage was hosting of Alan Adcock, General Manager - Corporate of Whangarei District Council. Alan was hosted by the South Burnett Regional Council and myself with his account of his trip is attached to this report.

### **SOLGM Summit**

After a day of travel my immersions in all things New Zealand Local Government commenced with the 2019 SOLGM Summit – “If it takes a village ...” which was held in Napier. The evening before the summit commenced was a pre-conference networking event at Mission Estate Winery for “Ask Your Team”. The conference opening was deeply moving and uplifting. Hau Mai Ki Ahunn – Rahiri (welcome) and Karakia whakataki (opening blessing) Almost the entire hour-long session was conducted in Māori. Doors were shut at 8:30 Sharp with everyone to be seated at that point. Once the doors were shut there was no entry in respect to the welcome.

Similarities and differences, there were no trade displays and lunch and morning teas were broken into the three breakout areas which did make it a bit trickier to meet a range of people other than the group you were with. The Summit used Slido.com for questions and surveys.

Topics included the upcoming amendments to the Local Government Act with the “Well Being Amendments”. Inclusion, equality, difference and diversity with the concept of what are we missing played a recurring theme. As was the question “When have we recovered?” being raised in various guises.

Interestingly, and in a very polite and inclusive way, it was noted that the SOLGM AGM was for members only and non-members may proceed to an early morning tea. Many



interesting and diverse presentations from an extremely relatable and practical discussion on illegal building work (New Zealand is having some difficulties including the small house concept) to listening to the Local Government Minister discuss the current legislation and reforms to a presentation by Jo Miller who was the Chief Executive at Doncaster in the UK and is now Chief Executive at Hutt City Council in New Zealand. Stewart Todd participated in the International president's panel with representatives from a number of Local Government Associations. We were even treated to a school student climate strike and protest at the venue. An excellent start to the exchange which was an extremely enjoyable conference and highly informative.

*Pictured Left: The International Presidents Panel –*

*Managing Diverse Communities*

### Whangarei District Council

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my exchange partner Alan Adcock, his family and the Whangarei District Council for making Nicola and I feel so welcome and organising an extensive programme whilst we were in their Local Government area.

### Key financial and other statistics 2018

<b>\$ (in thousands)</b>	Whangarei District	Median for all PROVINCIAL councils	New Zealand
<b>Public Equity</b>	1,509,916	1,435,460	123,568,227
<b>Operating Revenue</b>	127,255	80,473	9,879,372
<b>Operating Expenditure</b>	135,676	86,697	10,292,961
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>	96,073	42,682	4,887,998
<b>Rates Revenue</b>	81,186	55,974	5,815,327

Source: Local Authority Financial Statistics, Statistics New Zealand

Whangarei District Council has an estimated population of 96,000 in 2019 residing in a Local Authority area of 2,713 km<sup>2</sup>. The Council has an elected Mayor (Sheryl Mai) and a total of

13 Councillors including the Mayor. The Council employs 350 staff (2018) not including its roading services which are contracted out.

## Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA)

The Northland Transportation Alliance is a collaborative arrangement between the New Zealand Transport Agency and the Councils of Northland (Far North District Council, Kaipara District Council, Northland Regional Council, Whangarei District Council). It is a leading example in terms of the scale and scope of the collaboration.

In mid-2015 the Local Government Commission announced it would not proceed with proposals for re-organisation of local government arrangements in Northland at this stage but that it would work with the local councils on a range of collaboration activities. From this the Northland Transportation Alliance (NTA) was established in 2016 to deliver roading services.

The Northland Transportation Alliance is unique in its scope and is an excellent case study in progressing an initiative of this nature in an accelerated timeframe. It is an example of what can be achieved through visionary political leadership, committed executive management, and dedicated practitioners coming together to chart a new course.

An investment logic mapping exercise identified the following core problem statements (and the weighting applied to each):

Problem	Weight
Northland's lifestyle and opportunities are not enough on their own to attract high quality human resources in sufficient numbers to meet demand which impacts business capability.	20%
Our organisations are small, with people multitasking, meaning we don't prioritise time to be strategic or to specialise.	25%
Silos within Council's, NZTA, Iwi, Government Agencies and business, limit our ability to improve transport outcomes.	15%
Procurement and work programming practises lead to inconsistent, uncertain workloads and an unattractive contracting market.	30%
Low incomes and unrateable land, means infrastructure is difficult to fund	10%

Very similar issues to the LGA sector in a number of Queensland Councils. Regular feedback loops were initiated with interim reports to CEs Forum, Mayors Forum and full Council meetings to ensure a no-surprises environment and to gauge support for the various options as they were developing. Early feedback indicated the desire from each Council to

maintain control over their respective transportation programmes. To that end a range of pre-requisites were adopted including that:

- Each Council would retain asset ownership;
- Each Council would set their own budgets, priorities and levels of service;
- There would be no cross-subsidisation;
- Individual Councils continue to operate their own customer services and have dedicated business unit staff available for customer liaison; and
- Local presence retained in each Council area for customer liaison and direct Councillor interactions.

Potential benefits were also identified in the establishment of the NTA.

Benefit	Weight
A more engaged and capable workforce delivering superior asset management	20%
Improved transport/customer outcomes, enabling investment and social opportunities	25%
Improved Regional strategy, planning and procurement	15%
Transport Infrastructure is more affordable	30%

Road maintenance and projects are funded through a combination of council contributions (through rates) and the NZTA/Central Government subsidies. The Council component is termed “local share”. NZTA’s contribution is based on an agreed % called the Financial Assistance Rate (FAR). This rate is determined based on several factors and varies for each Council, (currently between 52% and 66% for Northland Councils).

The Alliance is a shared service model and not a legal entity. It is a multi-council alliance with the NZTA and it is also not an NZ Council Controlled Organisation. The NTA staff are each employed by one of the four partner councils. The decision of which council employs each staff member is based on who the staff member does most of their work for. In some cases, where the work is spread evenly across the four councils, one council will be nominated to employ the person and time sheeting is used to put the costs to the appropriate council. The majority of staff are co-located in Whangarei, local council field engineering and inspection staff remain based out of their respective Council area.

The establishment of the NTA has provided the opportunity for an integrated approach to local government transportation procurement across Northland. A single strategy covering the Local Authorities and the Regional Council creates the potential to deliver local benefits through wider opportunities and regional coordination.

## Northland Civil Defence

The Northland Group is governed by a joint committee of elected representatives from the Whangarei, Kaipara, and Far North District Councils and the Northland Regional Council. Representatives of the Police and Fire Service also attend meetings.

The Group is funded by members to a level acceptable to each member. The local authorities employ staff to manage the local CDEM work programmes agreed by the Northland CDEM Group. The Group's Emergency Management Office coordinates the implementation of the Group's programmes by these CDEM staff.

Hazard analysis is an important starting point for the CDEM plan because understanding the region's risk profile assists with the prioritisation of CDEM planning resources. The highest risks for the Northland region are:

❖ River flooding caused by localised heavy rain/thunderstorms provides the highest risk to the Northland region, closely followed by storm with widespread heavy rain and wind. The region's road network has proven particularly vulnerable to damage in many recent events,



with full recovery from the more significant events taking months to years. The last major flood event for the region was 2014.

❖ Tsunami: A locally generated tsunami resulting in 10-15m inundation above sea level has the potential to cause significant damage, though the probability is very low. The risk of human injury/death is high because of the short warning times with a local event.

❖ Electricity failure: The network has single points of vulnerability (the main electricity transmission line from Auckland and to the Refinery NZ Marsden Refinery) with the potential to cause widespread loss of service. If the failure is prolonged, there could be severe economic and social consequences.

❖ Human pandemic; the scenario evaluated was based on modelling that predicts a worst-case event with the first wave seeing 40% of people becoming ill in the first 8 weeks and 2% of these resulting in death.

Community Response Plans (CRPs) have progressively been developed in partnership with Northland communities to provide localised emergency procedures and advanced preparation for the risks that they face. They are generally driven by the communities themselves, with assistance from Civil Defence.

Not all communities may require such plans; and individuals and householders are encouraged to make their own plans. The [getready.govt.nz](http://getready.govt.nz) allows for the development of an individual online plan.



The range of issues are similar to the Queensland context and one point of note was reimbursement of costs. There is a provision under the CDEM Act for the recovery of certain costs from the central government. This process is worked through directly after the event. It is noted that not all funding is eligible and in the official information supplied there is a proviso that it is recommended that elected members do not make financial undertakings.

Supporting the CDEM Group is the Northland CEG, a statutory group comprising Chief Executive Officers (or senior representatives) of local authorities, senior emergency services managers and the Northland District Health Board. CEG implements the decisions of the CDEM Group and provides them with strategic

advice.

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#### Tourism / Economic Development

Visiting the region something struck me straight away – “It's just another white beach”. Whangarei was seeking its point of difference being overshadowed by the Bay of Islands. So many of the issues are the same or similar in regard to the understanding of the tourist market and establishment of reliable information and statistics. The Council has developed the following video to promote its cultural and brand:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvxEseBGj6c&t=10s>



There was a note of significant cross over of the tourism product with infrastructure development. For example, the bike and walking paths which circle town area and through parklands are not only seen as a major health and community benefit but a tourism feature. The paths are concrete and sealed though it was noted that they were unable to commercialise and were maintenance funded through council budget.

Another example was the Te Matau a Pohe, the fishhook of PoheSailors approaching Whangarei's Town Basin on the Hatea River at the very top of the Whangarei Harbour now

pass under the spectacular Bascule Bridge arching across the river known as Te Matau a Pohe, the fishhook of Pohe.

This \$32 million structure is the largest and most expensive Whangarei District Council civil engineering project in our District.

Inspired by the design of Maori fishhooks crafted of bone, the sleek, pale structure provides a grand entrance and spectacular exit for those arriving at and departing the Basin. While many vessels are able to pass under the bridge without requiring the bascule (lifting platform) to be raised, vessels over 6.5 metres in height need to phone or radio a request to see if the bridge needs to be lifted. There is no charge for this service. Vessels waiting can tie up to Pontoons on either side of the bridge. The road and the bridge carry approximately 10,000 vehicles per day and a viewing platform has been built for the tourism market. To cater for this market and to utilise the viewing area the Te Matau a Pohe is also opened on a scheduled basis at 12pm local time daily.

#### Whangarei District – *Love it here*

Other tourism facilities such as the Clapman’s National Clock Museum was gifted to Council, is located in the town basin and generally runs at a loss. The discussions around the i-sites and the future technology impacts were prevalent. The co-location of the economic development arm of Council with the Whangarei Chamber of Commerce was a sensible use of resources and information sharing. There are a range of festivals and activities including the:

- Whangarei Endless Summer;
- Festival of Motor Sport;
- Bernina Northlands Fashions Awards - School Fashion Show – Rotary Club of Whangarei South event; and the
- Fritter – Food, Wine, Music Festival.



Freedom camping has caused an impact for the region and indeed New Zealand. Packages have been developed to reward responsible freedom campers and the focus has moved to management as it appears a tourism trend that shows little sign of slowing and is loving areas to death.

Whangarei has used the concept of ambassadors to good effect to manage this tourism trend and guide people. Fines are used as a last resort to manage.

#### Other Opportunities

It is safe to say that the trip was not only education but extremely enjoyable. The Library was a community hub that allowed for everything from coffee in the Library Café to 3D printing. The ANZAC poppies display and Saturday morning the café in the library which was a true community gathering place and the self-service check outs that worked well. To name a few:

- The edible gardens;
- Pocket Park – Town Basin;
- The Ball Clock;
- Kiwi North natural history and heritage facility;
- Cantilever benching throughout parks and walkways – swap sides like old rail;
- The large amount of public art – acquisitive prize programme for sculpture / pottery;
- Signage including the Kiwi Crossing road signs;
- Giant park sundial – which was changed each season for day light saving;
- Sculpture of Māori ship with wave – sub-text in colonialism – commemorate first Māori landing site; and
- Dog water on drinking bubblers in parks – very dog friendly.

The Semenoff Stadium redevelopment was completed in May 2010 at a cost of \$18.5 million. Northland Regional Council contributed \$13 million and Whangarei District Council \$3 million towards the new Northland Events Centre. The Central Government contributed an additional \$2.5 million to allow the events centre facility to meet Rugby World Cup 2011 standards.



And on the list goes and by the way did I mention the oysters ... and the wine.

#### Conclusion

This report covers only a small snapshot of the exchange and the information exchanged. The range of experiences and opportunity are too numerous to do justice in this report.

I have previously stated and will reiterate, the exchange programme is one of the most valuable professional development opportunities that LGMA Qld offers.

I would like to thank the board for their trust in offering me this opportunity and to Peta and all the LGMA staff, a heartfelt thanks for their assistance, patience and efforts. I would be pleased to discuss or present the information and learnings from the exchange in any forum the board feels may be valuable.

Mark Pitt PSM



## Appendix

1. Alan Adcock, General Manager - Corporate of Whangarei District Council report.  
([https://www.solgm.org.nz/Article?Action=View&Article\\_id=224](https://www.solgm.org.nz/Article?Action=View&Article_id=224))
2. Itinerary – LGMA Exchange – Travel
3. Itinerary – LGMA Exchange – Alan Adcock Queensland
4. Itinerary – LGMA Exchange – Mark Pitt New Zealand
5. Tu Tika Tours

## Appendix 5

**From:** Tu Tika Tours <[hardings@tutikatours.co.nz](mailto:hardings@tutikatours.co.nz)>

**Sent:** Friday, 4 October 2019 11:19 AM

**To:** Mark Pitt <[MPitt@southburnett.qld.gov.au](mailto:MPitt@southburnett.qld.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Kia ora!

Kia ora Mark & Nicola,

It was a pleasure to meet you both, hope you enjoyed your time with us 😊

As promised, here are the words to our waiata.

### Te waiata kara - The colour song

Ma is white  
Whero is red  
Kakariki green  
Mangu is black  
Pango is too

A E I O U

Kowhai yellow  
Pakaka brown  
Kikorangi blue  
Karaka is our orange

A E I O U x2  
Hi Aue Hi!

Best wishes!

Nga mihi nui

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*"A Maori Cultural Experience"*