



Choosing Futures Waikato

Whiriwhiria Te Waa Heke o Waikato

Cooperation flavour of the day for community outcomes

In July 90 representatives from central and local government, business, education, not-for-profit, community and other organisations got together to share ideas about ways to progress regional community outcomes.

Opening words included those from the Honourable Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Youth Affairs and Customs, and Associate Minister for the Environment and Local Government. She reminded us that collaboration, cooperation and communication were key to progressing community outcomes.

During the day, participants considered information gathered by Choosing Futures Waikato to monitor and measure progress under the broad community outcomes themes – sustainable economy; quality of life; culture and identity; sustainable environment; and participation and equity – at a regional and local level across the Waikato.

The data tells us that while there is a perception that the Waikato region generally has a clean and green natural environment, there are opportunities for agencies to work collaboratively to more efficiently allocate resources to improve our energy conservation, urban air quality and river water quality.

People in the Waikato have an increased life expectancy, there has been growth in early childhood education rates and household crowding levels have reduced. However, housing affordability across the region is still an issue,

with costs continuing to increase as a proportion of household income.

While there has been economic growth across the Waikato, the region is experiencing a skill and labour shortage due to its low unemployment rate, growth in weekly incomes and an increase in the number of businesses and employees.

Positive indicators for cultural well-being include a steady rise in the number of Maori language speakers and more people employed in the cultural sector. Less positive is that a below average proportion of migrants and other people from minority ethnic groups in the region speak the first language of their ethnic group.

The region has a relatively high and growing level of representation by Maori and women in local authorities. Consistent with the trend throughout New Zealand over the past two decades voter turnout at local and general elections has been declining. Participants in the July workshop considered this information as they explored new ways to work together in the future.

Choosing Futures Waikato will be following up with participants of the workshops, and will produce a report about the ideas and opportunities for collaboration that emerged from the day.

Taking community outcomes forward

Choosing Futures Waikato – a group of councils and central government agencies working together to make progress on Waikato regional community outcomes – was set up in 2004. Choosing Futures Waikato was initially tasked with identifying regional community outcomes for the Waikato. In 2005, after consulting with the community and a wide range of other agencies and organisations, 38 regional community outcomes were identified, grouped together under five themes – sustainable environment, quality of life, sustainable economy, culture and identity, and participation and equity.

But work has not stopped there. Environment Waikato is responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress made towards the outcomes. Choosing Futures Waikato identified 75 core indicators and has collected data about them. Each indicator tells us about the current state and long-term trends for specific aspects of the region's well-being, for example water quality, life expectancy and how safe people feel. Monitoring the indicators will be ongoing.

Choosing Futures Waikato has produced reports about the indicators that councils, organisations, iwi, and individuals working towards improving our region's well-being, can draw on when planning for and making decisions about the future. The reports provide a snapshot of how the Waikato looks at present, which we can use to gauge how well we do in the future.

The regional community outcomes belong to the Waikato community as a whole. No one organisation is responsible for ensuring that the outcomes are achieved: everyone has a part to play in making sure that the future the community wants is the one we work towards.

Organisations are using the community outcomes to guide the things they do and the services they provide, and many organisations are sharing resources, information and expertise to achieve better and more efficient results for their communities.

Sets of iwi outcomes have also been developed in a parallel process, and indicators are currently being identified to monitor these.

To find out more about regional community outcomes, and work to monitor and report on them, go to www.choosingfutures.co.nz or contact the regional coordinator for community outcomes, Roxane Miller, on 021 937 846.

