



# PUBLICSECTOR

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**GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE  
- THE 21ST CENTURY PUBLIC SERVANT**

**DECOLONISING MUSEUM PRACTICE:  
NEW INSIGHTS FOR GOVERNMENT?**



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Decolonising museum practice



Cold rivers, dark forests

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By IPANZ New Professionals Convenor **Ashleigh Bywater-Schulze**

This Public Sector Journal is about future challenges and opportunities for the public service. It touches on many of the trends and themes which younger people working in Central and Local government sectors often think about.

So, the idea of resilience is relevant.

But I am not concentrating on the idea of personal resilience. While it is important and should never be underestimated when thinking about a resilient organisation, I am going to take a systems and technology focus.

2019 has been challenging to say the least. The March 15 Terror Attacks was an event I had never imagined. Public servants responded with energy and commitment, working together across such a wide range of organisations, sectors and disciplines. Public service employees revealed their deep sense of responsibility to our people and communities, people to people - humanity shone.

Technology is another playing field, one less forgiving. I will highlight a few scenarios where I am concerned that we are not adequately prepared.

If the Hikurangi Fault goes, how will our less populated South Island support the whole east coast of the North Island with our countries two biggest cities severely impacted? I think of the concentration

risk in Wellington. The home to every National Office of the Central Government, and home to the servers that support our services around the country.

Website resilience in the public sector is evidently a risk we are obviously not managing well in relation to information security. And in a crisis and big spike in traffic, there is a different challenge to website resilience. Our websites must not buckle.

These are high impact low probability events. How about one of the most common risks we encounter daily; cybersecurity and information attacks. The public sector has its own safeguards and is reliant on many partners who have their own protection from a potential cyber-attack. Banks will have contingency and failsafe arrangements to ensure we can continue to pay our own staff and public service clients. We rely on this.

I am calling on public sector leaders to champion this space, it's important to ensure that we are secure in our technology as we continue to see developments and changes. I acknowledge that many organisations are resilient. But this is also more than just singular organisations, this is system-wide. We are dependant and connected on one another across central and local government and into other sectors. If we are impacted on a national scale people will require services from more than one agency. How ready are we?

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



This edition looks to the future. It captures some themes that are changing the roles of public service employees. These trends are likely to intensify in 2020. They include the force of legislation to improve outcomes for Māori, more partnerships with NGOs, the burning need for environmentally sound practices, and the challenges of cultural diversity.

IPANZ will explore, dig into, and give more information and analysis to these themes in the months to come. This will be done through our events, training, communications, and written material. We cannot do this without members contacting us and sharing their positive stories and challenges – and telling us how IPANZ can assist. We will be reaching much further into the public sector, out to local government, out to other sectors to inspire, inform, and activate our members. We will be tapping into the wisdom of our public administration experts and thinkers to provide some substantial food for thought on our values and principles.

You are welcome to contact me direct at [Shenagh@ipanz.org.nz](mailto:Shenagh@ipanz.org.nz)

**Shenagh Gleisner**



**CONTRIBUTIONS  
PLEASE**

*Public Sector journal is always happy to receive contributions from readers.*

If you're working on an interesting project in the public sector or have something relevant to say about a particular issue, think about sending us a short article on the subject.

While we will always look at well-written pieces on any public sector subject, it would help if your article touched on or related to one of the journal's quarterly themes.

**Themes for 2019 are:**

**December: Open issue**

**Contact the editor Simon Minto at [simon.g.minto@gmail.com](mailto:simon.g.minto@gmail.com)**



# COMPETING DEMANDS AND VARIABLE MANAGERS

Results from the 2019 IPANZ member survey

**GEOFF PLIMMER, WONHYUK CHO, and ESME FRANKEN explain the IPANZ member survey and make some observations about the state of the public service and where it might be heading.**

This article reports on the survey of IPANZ members we carried out in February 2019. We wanted to find out what challenges public sector organisations and their employees face and what organisations can do to help employees grow and develop in their jobs.

We found that although public servants are motivated to do their jobs and serve the public, they face various barriers. Many experience high demands, many lack confidence in their ability, and some could be better supported by their managers.

## Who we surveyed

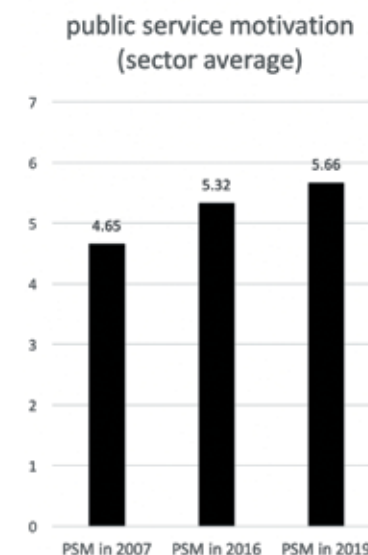
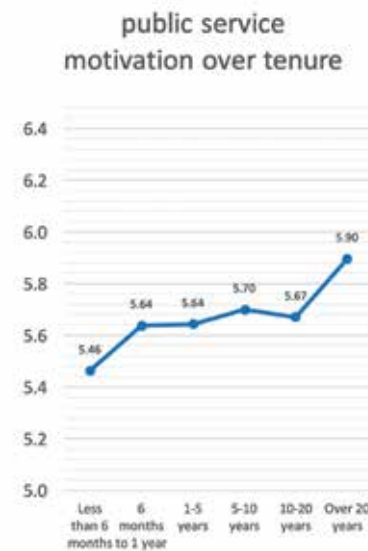
We surveyed 893 IPANZ members; 87% of them were permanent employees. More females (65%) than males (33%) took part in the survey. Most respondents were seasoned public servants. Most (67%) were between the ages of 25 and 54, and the sample reflects the ageing public sector workforce, with 28% of respondents over 55. These characteristics are reasonably reflective of New Zealand's broader public service.

## Public service motivation: Spirit of service?

Respondents reported high public service motivation. This refers to individuals' desire to serve the public with a purpose to do good for others and society. Providing meaningful (and effective) public services was important to over 90% of respondents. This indicates that the public sector workforce is highly motivated in terms of their intention to serve the public effectively, but not surprisingly, not as many (30%) are motivated to make "enormous sacrifices for the good of

society".

Overall, though, individuals are highly motivated to serve the public, and this motivation gets higher the longer one stays in the public sector. This may be a result of socialisation effects over time and the effect of internalising public values over time. It could also be due to generational differences. Our findings on employee



Data source: PSA, IPANZ

motivation are largely consistent with the literature.

The literature shows that high motivation predicts higher performance (though moderately), but what about public servants' work demands and stressors? And what kind of support do they get from their managers? These factors also matter in the effective delivery of public services.

## How demanding is public work?

We found that work is perceived to be demanding for most public employees. Most (62%) face tight or short deadlines quite often or all of the time, and 56% often or always need to deal with unforeseen problems on their own.

Nearly 50% of respondents strongly agree that they deal with competing demands from stakeholders and politicians, and over 90% face these demands to some degree in their work. Over 80% deal with competing client demands. These results align with the increasingly dispersed and networked nature of public services, which is part of a global trend.

These high (and often competing) demands place employees at risk of stress or burnout, particularly if they're experiencing poor management, which some are.

## Perceptions of competence

We measured the degree to which individuals believed in their work competence. Responses were mixed. Many (41%) lacked perceived competence in their job, while just over half (51%) believed they were competent. Many factors could play a role here. Self-esteem, support from peers and managers, and role clarity are just a few potential contributors. We found that women and men also responded differently to this question. Men are more likely to rate their competence highly. This may indicate that women underestimate their abilities in comparison with men – this is also found in many international studies.



Esme Franken

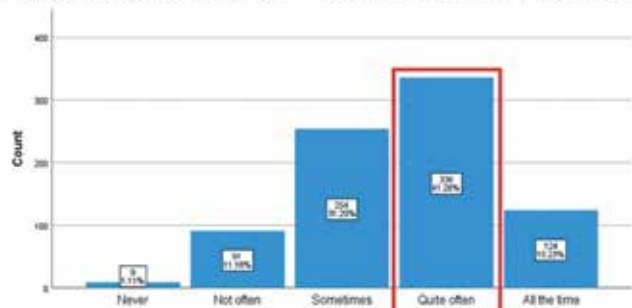
## Where do managers come in?

Good managers can make a difference, and the research indicates that globally, and in New Zealand, public sector managers are not always that good (see Plimmer, Bryson, and Teo in "Further reading"). In this study, however, respondents reported that in general, they felt well supported by

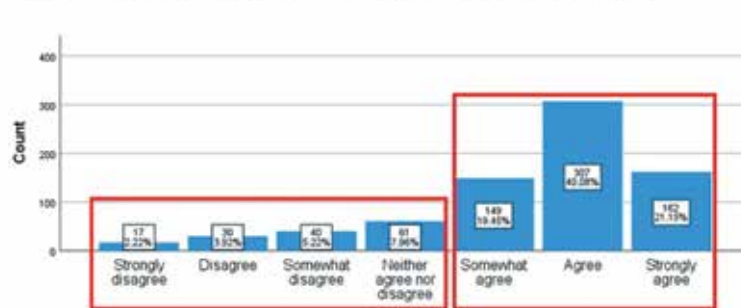


Geoff Plimmer

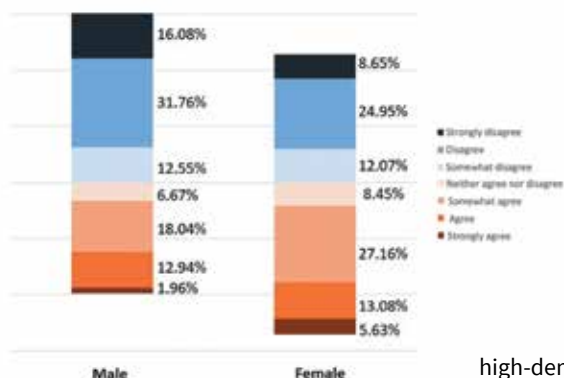
## Does your work entail solving unforeseen problems on your own?



## My manager gives guidance that is focused on outcomes



## Sometimes think I am not very competent at my job



job satisfaction even in workplaces under high stress and with high job demands. New Zealand public servants experience high workloads and complex demands from clients and stakeholders, but managers can make sure this does not have a detrimental effect on employees' wellbeing.

In some further analysis we did, the data indicated that in

high-demand workplaces, managers have to work harder, and go the extra mile, for employees to reach a reasonable level of employee wellbeing. This result is consistent across different measures of manager support and job demand. For example, managers need to provide individualised feedback to achieve a reasonable level of employee wellbeing in the organisation when employees face a very tight and short deadline.



Wonhyuk Cho

Our survey points to some interesting management implications. As well as holding managers to account, public organisations need to work at developing managers so they know how to effectively support their staff, particularly when managers are already busy and perhaps do not feel they have time for that "people management stuff". More demands on already busy managers may lead to managers burning out. Therefore, organisations need to develop and support managers so that both employees and managers can more easily tackle their various demands.

These are not easy problems to solve. But as we move into an increasingly complex and unpredictable future, better designed

jobs and better support and development are likely to matter that much more. Ideally, managers and employees trust each other and grow together so that they have the confidence, and the competence, to thrive in uncertain environments. Other research in the New Zealand public service has found that good people management makes a difference to organisational capability (see Plimmer, Bryson, Donnelly, Wilson, Ryan, and Blumenfeld in "Further reading") and that promoting shared leadership and having managers who actively manage the competing demands of public service work can help an organisation (see Zeier, Plimmer, and Franken in "Further reading"). Of course, there are many options to consider in deciding what approach to take.

## Going forward

The 2019 IPANZ survey has provided a useful overview of the current characteristics and experiences of public servants. Public servants face increasing demands in their work. Jobs are changing and becoming more dynamic, and the role of managers remains critical. This survey is hopefully the beginning of a larger, broader, ongoing study focused on developing public sector employees, managers, and organisations. Further research will help us to develop more robust conclusions on the current state of the public sector workforce and what this means for employees, employers, and organisations.

*These survey results were presented by Wonhyuk Cho at the New Zealand Public Sector Conference on 15 August 2019.*

## Further reading

"Opening the black box" by G. Plimmer, J. Bryson, and S. Teo in *Personnel Review*, 46(7), 2017.

"The legacy of new public management on workers, management capabilities, and organisations" by G. Plimmer, J. Bryson, N. Donnelly, J. Wilson, B. Ryan, and S. Blumenfeld in *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 42(1), 2017.

"Developing shared leadership in a public organisation: Processes, paradoxes and consequences" by K. Zeier, G. Plimmer, and E. Franken in *Journal of Management & Organization*, 2018.

their managers. For example, we measured leader member exchange and found that most respondents agree that exchanges with their manager are fair and positive.

We also measured how managers develop their staff. Overall, managers were rated highly in encouraging teamwork, building trust, and supporting staff growth and development

However, we found that, while most public servants experience reasonable management, around one in five experience low or mediocre management support. A lot of these staff had been with their managers a long time, suggesting some managers can stay in their jobs despite being poor at managing people.

## Satisfaction and employee wellbeing

Our results showed that people are satisfied in their jobs overall, but a decent number (21%) are not satisfied (or are dissatisfied) with their jobs. This number indicates that even those with high motivation might not feel satisfied in their work. In terms of wellbeing, most public servants reported it to be good or very good, but 20% reported poor wellbeing. Public organisations should consider how to better support and develop better satisfaction and wellbeing.

## What to do?

Managers play a key role in either accentuating or helping to manage the demands on employees, as well as supporting employee competence. We found that supportive managers can increase employee wellbeing and

# GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

## THE 21ST CENTURY PUBLIC SERVANT



***The skills of the public servant in the 21st century is being discussed by many of our international peers – most notably, the United Kingdom and Australia. An emerging field of research points towards a new set of skills for public servants. CARL BILLINGTON set out to explore the research and compare how the findings stack up against New Zealand’s public sector.***

### **Uncertainty and complexity: the context of the future**

Following the 2008 financial crisis, the United Kingdom’s public service has been operating in an environment of extreme austerity – leading to inevitable, and sometimes severe, cutbacks.

This led University of Birmingham researchers Catherine Needham and Catherine Mangan to explore what the future might look like for the public service. Although the financial context is different from ours, the changes it has set in motion are highly relevant.

#### **The 21st century public servant:**

Is a municipal entrepreneur, undertaking a wide range of roles
Engages with citizens in a way that expresses their shared humanity and pooled expertise
Is recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise
Builds a career that is fluid across sectors and services
Combines an ethos of publicness with an understanding of commerciality
Is rethinking public services to enable them to survive an era of permanent austerity
Needs organisations that are fluid and supportive rather than siloed and controlling
Rejects heroic leadership in favour of distributed and collaborative models of leading
Is rooted in a locality that frames a sense of loyalty and identity
Reflects on practice and learns from that of others

Source: Mangan C. & Needham C. *The 21st Century Public Servant*. University of Birmingham. Economic & Social Research Council. 2019.

Needham and Mangan identified 10 traits, shown in the table, which they believe will be core capabilities for future public servants. These traits suggest a growing focus on entrepreneurial and relational skills, leading to a greater emphasis on collaborative engagement and innovative design – skills the public service is not traditionally known for.

### **The rise of the innovation coach**

Similar themes are appearing in the New Zealand public sector – evidenced in part by the growing use of business accelerators as innovation coaches to the public sector.

Stefan Korn, Chief Executive for Creative HQ, explains: “In the 21st century, we find ourselves in a world that is increasingly more complex, volatile, and uncertain.



**Stefan Korn**

“We are seeing an increasing number of what the UN have defined as wicked problems – ranging from homelessness to healthcare. And we have the internet acting as a super-connector, meaning that the effects of any given issue are no longer isolated.

“From the end of the Second World War, most governments have been operating in a very steady policy environment, providing services in a linear way because it made sense and was possible to do so,” Korn adds.

“The tools and techniques we could rely on last century no longer work. The issues we’re facing now are so complex and so interlinked, that no single entity can address them. That is what’s driving the need for public sector innovation,” Korn explains.

Korn also suggests we are seeing a change in the government’s role.

“Solving the problem is not the government’s role alone. It’s a shift from a public administration that is used to setting the policy and delivering the services to a public administration that still sets the policy but facilitates solutions that are informed by and co-created with a number of entities and communities.”

## THE TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES WE COULD RELY ON LAST CENTURY NO LONGER WORK.

Let’s turn to some local examples to explore what these ideas look like.

### **Transpower: innovation in a sector where stability is key**

Transpower manages the electricity grid that delivers power to local distribution networks and large industry, which then supply businesses, schools, individuals, and communities. New Zealand lives literally depend on the reliability and stability of their service.

The majority of Transpower’s infrastructure – the 65,000 kilometres of steel conductor wire and the 24,000 steel towers that support it – was built in the 1950s. Much of it will reach end-of-life replacement costs in the next two decades.



Steve Jay, Grid Development Group Manager, explains: “We do not believe that a traditional incremental approach to fixing things is going to work.



Steve Jay

“The traditional way of solving problems is to identify the issue, throw some experts at it, and you typically get an incremental output as a result. It doesn’t deliver the step change you need – that requires different thinking.”

Transpower assembled two small teams: one focused on tower corrosion challenges and the other on ageing conductor lines. Staff across the organisation were invited to register their interest and complete Creative HQ’s online innovation capability assessment. The results were used to assemble the two teams.

“We’ve learned that, for challenges of this scale, diversity of thinking is absolutely essential. As a result, we have some subject-matter experts as part of our project teams, but we also have some completely random choices in terms of their field of expertise – but they have the creative, entrepreneurial mindset we need.

“People need to know you’re inviting them to experiment and you’re expecting some of those experiments to fail,” Jay adds. “The mentality we applied was ‘quick-win, quick-fail’.”

#### Bringing the right mix of people together

Another challenge Stefan Korn has observed is that workplace innovation teams are not deliberately selected for their innovation capability – it tends to be whoever is available or a manager’s favourite employee.

“We’ve worked with hundreds of large organisations now, and the success of any innovation is directly related to the composition of the team and the innovation capability of its members.”

“Innovation is a full contact sport. You cannot learn this in theory. You need to take real people and a real problem and put them in a room together. We assess people’s preferences on 21 skills and competencies that come alive in a tactile environment – things like empathy, vulnerability, curiosity, dealing with uncertainty,” Korn explains.

“Some people come into the start-up environment and love it; others hate it. Both responses are totally valid, but it’s in everyone’s interest to identify that before assembling a team.”

#### Up close and personal

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has also drawn on external coaches to build their capacity to engage with the industries they regulate. MPI are the first New Zealand agency to participate in Nesta’s States of Change initiative.

Nesta – an innovation foundation formed in the United Kingdom – launched the States of Change to build the capability of governments to practically deal with the complex problems they face.

Rachel Clements, Principal Advisor for MPI’s Farm Systems Change Project, explains: “Feedback from farmers has highlighted the need for us to understand the practical implications we create for them when policy is being shaped.

“Last year we interviewed farmers, listening to their stories and learning about the reality of farming in the current environment. We conducted 21 interviews, spending three to eight hours on each farm.



Rachel Clements

“It was incredibly valuable and really welcomed. Farmers are proud of their contribution to our economy, and they care deeply about our environment – they want to be part of the solution. They’re looking for genuine dialogue and partnership. Our traditional approaches won’t create that.

“It’s a much more open and more vulnerable approach. Working this way – this close to your stakeholders – might be out of your comfort zone, but there’s a whole heap of benefits. We can shape policy, but our farmers and communities will shape our future. We have to be in this together,” Clements adds.

An interesting side effect is the degree of accountability they now feel to deliver for the farmers.

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## INNOVATION IS A FULL CONTACT SPORT. YOU CANNOT LEARN THIS IN THEORY.

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“The team has developed some real empathy with the sector and a much better understanding of what the sector is up against. They now have this amazing accountability to do something that will work,” Clements explains.

#### From team culture to organisational culture

Despite those sentiments, many organisations encounter hurdles when they try to embed new ways of working. This can range from less visible barriers such as processes, policies, and KPIs that reinforce (and sometimes reward) the status quo through to the simple logistics of trying to create space for innovation while juggling work loads.

Consequently, creating a collaborative, multi-disciplinary team to tackle complex challenges is one thing; embedding those traits within a wider organisational culture is something else.

Reflecting on Transpower’s experience, Steve Jay observes: “It’s easy to pull a team together, but how do you avoid creating the impression that innovation and ingenuity is something special that only a few people can participate in?

“Add to that the fact that, if you don’t effectively backfill those you pull into project teams, you create stress behind them while they’re on the project with more stress waiting for them when they get back. The reward for helping create new ways of working is you get one and a half jobs!

“It’s almost like you need a business model where you’ve got 10 percent spare capacity. Otherwise, we risk creating resistance and reluctance among those who are most able to champion change. I think every company has challenges with this,” Jay adds.

#### Appetite for uncertainty

“In the past, the public service could get away with being less responsive, for example, by making people spend their lunchtimes waiting in queues to process a form,” Dave Heatley, Principal Advisor for the New Zealand Productivity Commission reflects.

“It wasn’t that long ago that Inland Revenue wouldn’t call you back if you were on a mobile. That era of impersonal service is at an end. It’s almost inconceivable today.

“The challenge is that government has a two-faced relationship with innovation. It sounds great in theory, but it introduces uncertainty, disruption, and political risk – three core ingredients government agencies have little appetite for.



Dave Heatley

“You have to be able to branch and clip: branch out and experiment, then clip off the failures. Government doesn’t branch well, and it can’t clip. No minister wants to announce that they don’t know what to do and are therefore going to commission a range of experiments in the hope that one might succeed. Yet the entrepreneurial sector does this every day – it’s the only way forward if we want to innovate. We are going to need to experiment more together.”

### Inherent tensions

Catherine Needham picks up on some of these inherent tensions: “Some of this is about exploring how we can work differently in the front line to build better relationships, get better outcomes, and potentially save money. Everyone is going to be up for that.



Catherine Needham

“But some of it also brings more difficult conversations about the need to think more commercially. That might mean some difficult decisions for our populations. It might mean closing libraries or staffing them with volunteers. It might mean charging people for the use of parks – which is happening in some places already.

“There are ethical questions too. We’ve had enterprising crematoriums selling off the scrap metal that is left over at the end of a cremation. We need to retain a sense of public service ethos, and we’re going to need to navigate that carefully when it comes into conflict with commercial drivers,” Needham adds.

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## YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO BRANCH AND CLIP: BRANCH OUT AND EXPERIMENT, THEN CLIP OFF THE FAILURES.

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“When times were good, one of our councils was able to upgrade the local playground. Sometime later, the neighbouring village needed a similar upgrade but the council simply couldn’t afford it. Instead, one of the councillors worked with the local lumberyard and drew on skills people had in the community, and they built a wooden play facility at a fraction of the price. We need to encourage this sort of social entrepreneurship.

“If we could start working communities in a different way, we might find we access more resources and unlock all sorts of potential solutions together,” Needham adds.

Needham also reflects on the fact that the research paints a near-impossible picture of a future public servant who engages richly with citizens, manages their work, manages to innovate, and balances their own self care.

“The reality is these attributes will exist in collective form within teams rather than in a single person. The 21st century public servant is a composite role that exists collectively in a series of work practices rather than as a blueprint for a single worker.

“Ultimately, I guess the key question is whether austerity creates a burning platform for innovation or whether it just kills hope and positivity.”

### Signs of hope

With those challenges in mind, we asked Stefan Korn to reflect on what changes he’s observed since Creative HQ first began working with public sector clients.

“The first GovTech programme we ran was with MBIE in 2015. Demo Day involved 100 people, with no one really sure they wanted to be associated with an accelerator programme for innovation in the public sector.

“Now, three years later, we received over 70 applications for projects applying to be included in the latest GovTech programme we kicked off last month – several of which were from international governments.

“Most people in government now understand that we absolutely need to innovate in the public sector and there is a need to upskill around entrepreneurial skills. And that we need programmes like GovTech to help create breakthrough innovation solutions for societal problems – solutions that are impossible to develop inside individual government agencies using traditional approaches,” Korn adds.

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## THE KEY QUESTION IS WHETHER AUSTERITY CREATES A BURNING PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION OR WHETHER IT JUST KILLS HOPE AND POSITIVITY.

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One finding that perhaps wasn’t anticipated was the degree of personal transformation involved in the process of changing public sector practice – something Korn regularly sees first-hand.

“One thing we’ve observed is that in order to create this breakthrough innovation, we are also seeing a personal transformation from the public sector staff who come in here. Every single person who participates seems to go through a journey of personal transformation.

“It typically takes about six weeks. It’s almost like a switch flips – and the desire to keep working this way becomes part of them from that point forward,” Korn explains.

“You can draw whatever organisational charts you want, give people whatever titles you want, surround the entire office in kanban boards, and adopt all the rituals of Agile. But if people don’t individually buy into it and aren’t willing to transform personally, none of this matters,” Korn adds.

“Organisations transform one person at a time. The problem with that is it takes time and effort. But everything we see confirms that transforming one person at a time is the only successful approach – everything else is a fundamental waste of time and resources.”

It seems there is a genuinely exciting but challenging future ahead for the 21st century public service and the 21st century public servant.

A future that is increasingly relational, entrepreneurial, human, and creative.

But also one that is deeply personal. Are we up for it?

# Innovation in a complex world

*A conversation with Gael Surgenor*

***Since 2015, Gael Surgenor has been the Director Community and Social Innovation for The Southern Initiative (TSI) – an Auckland Council place-based initiative covering Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa, and Papakura in South Auckland. Funding is also provided by central government and some philanthropic partners.***

***Almost 20 percent of Auckland's population lives in the area covered by the work of TSI. Its aims are to create, foster, and support innovative social and economic change. The way it does this includes identifying change makers, brokering relationships, encouraging social enterprise, and building community and individual capability.***

***ANTHONY RICHARDS talked with Gael about TSI and how the public sector can innovate to deal with increasingly complex demands.***

**What do you think has been core to the success of The Southern Initiative?**

Being a place-based initiative is the key to our work as we can get close to the community.

We draw our understanding of what's going on and what's needed from the community. Place-based work starts with people's lives, realities, and experiences rather than the siloed issues that government agencies are organised around.



*Gael Surgenor*

Some families and communities are not served well enough by the current policy and service system. We get to see the effects of services that might not be properly joined up or have been designed some distance away from the community. I'm not saying a place-based approach is easy or the only way, but it does give us a way to work from the community as our starting point. We leverage our proximity to the community for the benefit of the community.

As a practical example, we've been working with the concept of social procurement – trying to ensure more local enterprises, including social enterprises, and Māori and Pasifika enterprises are included in the council's supply chain, including Auckland Transport.

It's an approach other councils are interested in and are starting to adopt.

TSI and Auckland Co-design Lab (which sits inside the TSI team) are learning about working together differently for outcomes that matter for families and communities. This kind of approach asks what will it take in terms of mindsets, capabilities, and shifts in the system to achieve better outcomes.

There is real potential in the role of local government, in partnership with others, to shift from centralised policy and service design to more responsive, experimental, collaborative approaches tailored to local communities in their context.

**Apart from your local context, is there other information you draw on?**

Yes definitely. The Auckland Council and central government collects a lot of information that's very important. It's only going to get more important in the future.

The question is how we use that information to help us better understand and respond to our communities – after all, that's where the information came from. The key thing is the lens you use to make sense of all the data and information. Often data can be too aggregated, missing out the different characteristics of communities and not giving enough clarity to understand its implications.

More importantly, if you don't view data through the experience of the community, you might end up reinforcing misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge and miss out on the complexity we are dealing with. This can be a particular challenge for larger organisations or those with a specific focus.

The increased availability of information and data is a real opportunity for innovation in public services, but policy makers need to properly understand its context. So for us, it's very important that qualitative or thick data is used with quantitative or big data.

**Can you talk more about the philosophy of co-design you mentioned earlier?**

It's important not just to see it as co-design but also as participatory design and co-production. Involving whānau and community in an experimental and collaborative approach results in a more holistic and connected framing of issues and, in turn, results in more innovative and systemic responses. This can mean reconfiguring existing and newly identified resources in different and non-traditional ways. Genuine co-design and collaboration requires time for building trust, relationships, and



alignment.

### **Does co-design help us deal with complexity?**

We'll never overcome complexity – we can, however, become better at embracing it and working with it. It is beyond the capacity and responsibility of one agency on its own to respond. The co-design process creates a temporary space and collaborative structure where local and central government, whānau, frontline workers, and community organisations can come together to learn and understand connections between challenges and outcomes. This requires an openness, a learning mindset, and being reflective, adaptive, and comfortable with uncertainty.

### **Do you think we can get better at this?**

Yes, we can get better at this. Government is good at responding to a disaster or emergency. Christchurch has seen more than its fair share of this.

We're not so good though when it comes to ways of dealing with slower-burning social and economic disasters, which can also have significant impacts but occur over a longer timeframe.

We somehow need to develop the same sense of urgency to tackle these problems. But rather than trying harder or even faster with our current ways of working, something more fundamental is needed. We need to ally the strengths governments can bring with the strengths people and communities can bring to grappling with complex problems.

### **Looking 5 to 10 years ahead, what do you see as key challenges facing the design and delivery of public services?**

There will continue to be greater expectations on improving the way governments, at all levels, work – this means being better at understanding the complexity and challenges communities face from their real experiences and context. The conventional approach to policy development of issue identification, developing options, coming up with solutions, which are then turned into programmes or services, is not the only way to design

policy. We're going to need to be more agile and get better at working at finer degrees of resolution.

Trying new ways – experimenting, innovating, and testing – based on the real experiences of communities will need to become core to the culture of public service agencies. The values of agility and flexibility we hear a lot about will become essential.

Getting better at prototyping and testing at an appropriate scale is also going to be a much-needed skill for managers and across the system as a whole. Understanding the role of government in enabling and sustaining community-led and peer-to-peer models as alternatives to services and programmes is vital.

Being comfortable testing ideas that might not work is not an easy thing in the public space, but as complexity increases, it's going to be increasingly important to take calculated risks and learn from it.

**To find out more about TSI, go to [www.tsi.nz](http://www.tsi.nz)**



## **Machinery of Government - Full Speed Ahead**

We are well into the second half of 2019 and demand for policy professionals is stronger than ever. There are a number of key initiatives and projects which are absorbing a significant amount of policy development capacity in Wellington. This has put pressure on both the permanent and contract candidate supply. We are constantly on the lookout for policy and communications specialists who want to be part of exciting new initiatives.

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## DECOLONISING MUSEUM PRACTICE: NEW INSIGHTS FOR GOVERNMENT?

*How a Northland iwi's partnership with Auckland Museum provides a possible model for government agencies*

***New Zealand's public service has been on a mission to move out of monocultural mode for decades. JACQUI GIBSON explores a four-year partnership between Ngāti Kuri and the Auckland War Memorial Museum to see if there are lessons for the public service.***

A true willingness to partner with iwi would totally transform New Zealand's public service says Ngāti Kuri board member Sheridan Waitai.

But she's not holding her breath.

"After all these years, we're still trying to forge a relationship with the Crown as an iwi. It's sad, really. But we're just not getting very far. There doesn't seem to be a true willingness. So we've simply got on with living our aspirations with support from other less conventional partners," Sheridan tells me on a visit to the Far North.

### **Ngāti Kuri and the WAI 262**

Ngāti Kuri is an iwi of approximately 6,500 people.

Their rohe covers 1 million square kilometres of land and ocean, extending from Maunga Tohoraha (Mt Camel) in the south, to Te Rerenga Wairua (Cape Reinga) in the north, to the off-shore islands of Manawatawhi (the Three Kings Islands), and up to Rangitahua (the Kermadec Islands).

In 1991, Ngāti Kuri was one of six iwi who lodged a Treaty of Waitangi claim called the WAI 262.

The claim made a case to change the way the country's flora and fauna are managed and give Māori greater control over things Māori such as indigenous plants and animals and other taonga, such as mātauranga Māori or indigenous knowledge.

It was the first whole-of-government claim and resulted in a lengthy report published in 2011, *Ko Aotearoa Tēnei*, documenting Māori taonga species and how they should be protected.

Sheridan's grandmother, the late Saana Waitai-Murray, was one of the original claimants and the only claimant alive when the Crown finally delivered its report.

"She dedicated her life to that claim. But, look, it's now another eight years down the track, and we're still awaiting a formal response from government."

### **Partnership with Auckland Museum**

The silver lining in all this, however, says Sheridan, is the iwi's relatively new partnership with Auckland Museum, initiated as a way to breathe life back into the WAI 262 claim and realise Ngāti Kuri's post-Treaty settlement goals.

One of the iwi's primary goals is to completely rejuvenate their lands and oceans, bring back taonga species, and transform 33,000 hectares of their rohe into an eco-sanctuary, protected by an 8.5 kilometre predator-proof fence.

"Our partnership with Auckland Museum's natural science team is absolutely central to achieving our aspirations as an iwi," says Sheridan.

To date, the partners have developed a shared-work programme, which continues long-term land and ocean studies and kicks off new studies such as a stocktake of Ngāti Kuri taonga species.



*Sheridan Waitai with some of the Ngāti Kuri taonga*

To take the workload off Ngāti Kuri and to co-ordinate the scientific research within their rohe, Auckland Museum now brokers contact between Ngāti Kuri and New Zealand's scientific institutions such as NIWA; Landcare Research; and Auckland, Otago, Massey, and Canterbury universities.

**OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH  
AUCKLAND MUSEUM'S NATURAL  
SCIENCE TEAM IS ABSOLUTELY  
CENTRAL TO ACHIEVING OUR  
ASPIRATIONS AS AN IWI.**

Museum staff regularly run "bioblitz" events in the Far North, teaching Ngāti Kuri kids how to survey pest and taonga species and monitor the health of ecosystems such as freshwater streams.



Tom Trnski with one of Auckland Museum's taonga

The forest area of Te Papa

Ngāti Kuri objects that are in the natural science collection are now catalogued in both Western scientific and mātauranga Māori terms, while new exhibitions exploring the natural sciences from a Ngāti Kuri worldview are in train.

Early in the partnership, koiwi (human remains) belonging to Ngāti Kuri stored in the museum were returned to the Far North.

Auckland Museum Head of Natural Science Tom Trnski says the four-year partnership has completely transformed the way his team works with Ngāti Kuri.

But it's also done wonders for the museum's understanding of how to work successfully with iwi.

"I'll never forget the day Ngāti Kuri approached us. They basically said: 'Look, we've had your scientists coming up here since the early nineteenth century and we're sick of the one-way relationship. You seem to think it's okay to do your work and then disappear, taking your knowledge about our lands and oceans with you. Well, we're no longer okay with that. We want to form a true partnership with you. We want a relationship that's reciprocal, where you support our aspirations and we support yours.'

"Honestly? My first thought was, 'Holy moly, how are we going to bypass the usual Crown-led approach and navigate our way through this? But we found a way. And, really, that ultimatum from Ngāti Kuri was the start of a whole new era for the relationship."

### Museum practice in New Zealand

Museums Aotearoa Executive Director Phillipa Tocker believes the Ngāti Kuri partnership with Auckland Museum is unique for putting science at the centre of their relationship.

However, New Zealand museums are generally ahead of the game when it comes to partnering with Māori and embracing biculturalism. Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand's only national museum, is a case in point.

"These days, New Zealand is teaching the global museum sector an entirely different way to carry out its work – examples include the repatriation of human remains and the status of mātauranga Māori in our research work and exhibitions," says Phillipa.

"It's part of a bigger international shift. Museums have moved from being the 'keepers' to the 'storers' of taonga and knowledge. We don't so much 'show' visitors objects as encourage them to 'experience' them. And we're less 'knowledge centred' and much more 'people centred'.

## I'D SAY IT'S THE BIGGER MUSEUMS THAT ARE EMBRACING BICULTURAL PRACTICE AND LEADING THE WAY.

"Saying that, we've still got a long way to go. We don't have nearly enough Māori staff in our sector, for example, and best practice is patchy. Museums Aotearoa is the parent body of approximately 470 museums. As a general rule, I'd say it's the bigger museums that are embracing bicultural practice and leading the way."

### Decolonising museums

Te Papa Kaihautū (Māori Co-Leader) Dr Arapata Hakiwai agrees. "Museums worldwide are decolonising their practice – and they're looking to institutions like Te Papa for ideas on how to do it. Just this year, I spoke at a European Union session at Cambridge University on Te Papa's bicultural approach.

"Two years ago, our chief executive and I shared Te Papa's experience at the Australian and New Zealand School of Government. There's a real acknowledgment that museums, just like other public agencies, must change."

Today, Te Papa has a wide range of policies and practices to support its work with iwi, says Arapata.

For example, the museum has developed more than 20 individual relationships with iwi. Every two years, Te Papa staff meet iwi at regional hui to discuss iwi aspirations. There's a four-year Iwi-in-Residence programme, and Te Papa staff are frequently involved in Treaty discussions.





*A few of the taonga at Auckland Museum*

“We started down the path of decolonising museology years ago; before we even opened. We were determined we weren’t going to perpetuate a practice that doesn’t serve our nation’s interest.

“We said to ourselves, ‘Why shouldn’t we create a unique, bicultural museum practice? Why should we blindly adopt what other museums are doing when we know it disenfranchises and disempowers and is really counter to creating meaningful relationships?’”

Arapata says museums such as Te Papa and Auckland Museum have plenty to teach New Zealand’s government agencies looking to develop new ways of working.

“But, to do this work, you have to be prepared to interrogate the old ways. I’d say the journey towards biculturalism, especially as a nation, is ongoing and potentially very difficult because, at the end of the day, it’s about sharing power and authority.”

### **Public sector change**

Te Arawhiti Chief Executive Lil Anderson agrees the journey can be tough, but she insists New Zealand’s public sector of more than 350,000 people is finally ready to change.

“It’s taken us this long – about 35 years – to repair the broken relationship through the Treaty process, but we’re ready now,” says Lil, who set up Te Arawhiti, the Office for Māori Crown Relations, last year.

And while her office is coming up with some of the answers, others are being found in successful iwi partnerships like the one Ngāti Kuri shares with Auckland Museum and those fostered by Te Papa, she says.

“What’s clear is that central government needs to follow suit. We need to completely rethink the way we engage with iwi. I’m talking about everyone from leadership to policy makers to people delivering services in the regions.

“We need to engage more, and we need to change the way we engage. We need to explore the institutional racism and unconscious bias within our agencies. We need to rethink our organisational processes – from the way we govern to our hiring practices. And we need to identify the ingredients of successful partnerships and embed them in our agency practices.”

Right now, several new ideas about how to do that are being developed for discussion with public sector chief executives and the Minister for Māori Crown Relations, Kelvin Davis.

Travelling to Kaitia, for example, to talk to people who are living in poverty face to face and involve them in policy solutions might become standard practice for

policy makers in the future, says Lil.

So too might all-of-government professional development centred on achieving recognised levels of cultural competence.

In July, Te Arawhiti launched a new online portal called Te Haeata outlining the Crown’s Treaty commitments to Māori. There are around 14,000 commitments in total.

Next year, the portal will become open to the public and give everyone a way to track an agency’s progress towards meeting its Treaty commitments.

Meantime, Te Arawhiti has started documenting the Crown’s iwi partnerships (and what’s being achieved within each one) as another way to track progress and share good practice.

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**WE NEED TO ENGAGE MORE, AND  
WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY  
WE ENGAGE.**

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They recently assigned Te Puni Kōkiri as the lead agency to work with Ngāti Kuri and other agencies to finally resolve the WAI 262.

“How would I rate the Crown’s relationship with iwi today?” asks Lil.

“I’d probably give it a four out of 10 to be honest. I’d be wrong to say we’re starting from zero, because there are a few amazing pockets of success out there. Yes, we have a long way to go – but in five years’ time, I hope we’ll at least double our current score.”

*The writer would like to acknowledge the Aotearoa New Zealand Science Journalism Fund, sponsored by BioHeritage Challenge, Ngā Koiora Tuku Iko, for support to travel to Auckland and the Far North for this story.*

## COLD RIVERS, DARK FORESTS, AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE THE LIFE OF A BIODIVERSITY RANGER

*You might have heard of a biodiversity ranger. But what do they actually do? KATHY OMBLER chatted with two of DOC's biodiversity specialists and was invited into a world of feisty little animals, ancient waterfowl, kiwi "crèches", cold rivers, dark forests, and absolute dedication to and love for our native species, no matter how ugly.*

If walking down freezing rivers in winter searching for elusive whio (blue duck) sounds appealing; if sitting tight in a cold, dark forest to count kiwi calls meets your idea of a good night out; and if being bitten by feisty little bats is your thing, then have we got the perfect job for you!

At least that's Ali Beath's opinion after working for years as a biodiversity ranger in the central North Island. "I thought I'd stay in that job forever," she recalls. She now has the more office-based role of Senior Ranger Biodiversity, but she still gets out when she can.

Biodiversity rangers are in the job because they absolutely care about the plants and animals they are working to protect, Beath says.

"You've got to have a passion for conservation and love the outdoors. It's often about being wet and cold and muddy and walking down rivers in winter. It also helps to have a degree," she adds. Beath's own university study, in a round about way, is how she discovered biodiversity work.



*Ali Beath with a kiwi in Tongariro Forest*

"I always knew I wanted to work with animals, so I took a Bachelor of Science in zoology and ecology at Massey and, in my final year, was offered an opportunity to work with short-tailed bats in Ohakune one summer. I ended up doing two summers as a post graduate and just got hooked."

Beath stayed in the region working for an environmental consultant, monitoring kiwi and whio and surveying freshwater fish, lizards, and bats. Then in 2005, she was appointed Whio Team Leader with DOC. She loved her new role.

### IT'S OFTEN ABOUT BEING WET AND COLD AND MUDDY AND WALKING DOWN RIVERS IN WINTER.

"It was really great being out there on the rivers monitoring whio and trapping stoats to protect them. I also worked intensively with kiwi in Tongariro Forest, plus I did more bat monitoring. At the time, I thought those were the best years of my career. I was in my 20s and felt it was a real privilege working with these amazing creatures."

But it was also quite a narrow focus, and there was so much more to learn, she says, hence the step up to the current role, which involves planning biodiversity work across the Tongariro district, which is carried out by a team of twelve.

"We do a lot of threatened species work, such as kiwi monitoring around 1080 and whio and bat monitoring. We also have threatened native plants to care for, for example, mistletoes, endemic orchids, and pua-o-te-rēinga (wood rose) that the bats pollinate, as well as a very rare alpine watercress."

All that monitoring does have a purpose, she explains. "We monitor the bats, for example, to see if their population is healthy. If we saw a decline, we would consider how to turn that around, perhaps by adding more stoat or cat traps or by trapping over a wider area."

Predator control is very much on the programme. There's also a massive weed programme, dealing with wilding pines, broom, heather, and other invasive weeds, throughout Tongariro National Park.

Beath still loves the work. "I know it sounds corny, but the highlight for me is knowing you're making a difference. The whio

population has tripled in the last decade, and the local bat population is increasing, so that tells us what we are doing, as in aerial 1080 and trapping, is working."

And we work with such special creatures, she adds. "Whio is an ancient species of waterfowl that appeared very early in evolutionary history. Short-tailed bats are unique among the world's bat species. They're ugly and they have real attitude; they'll be biting the hell out of your hand and you think, good on you, here's a little native species fighting back. And holding a kiwi in your hand? It never gets old."

Like Beath, South Westland rowi specialist Iain Graham tells a similar story about his path to conservation biodiversity work. In Graham's case, with a Bachelor of Science under his belt, he headed south for a summer ranger's job at Franz Josef 13 years ago, and yes, he's still there.

"I was working towards a career in the police, ideally as a dog handler, and while I was recovering from surgery, I took a temporary job in Westland doing track and hut work in the glacier valleys. I just fell in love with the place."

### I KNOW IT SOUNDS CORNY, BUT THE HIGHLIGHT FOR ME IS KNOWING YOU'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

Graham stayed on, doing conservation contract work until he found a permanent biodiversity role. Ōkārito Forest, predator-free islands in the Marlborough Sounds, and saving rowi kiwi, the "rarest of the rare", became his focus. What, exactly, does his work entail?

In a nutshell, more than 90 percent of kiwi chicks born in the wild die within their first six months, most of them killed by stoats before the kiwi are big enough to defend themselves. In 2005, that figure was even higher for rowi, then surviving in a small remnant population in South Westland's Ōkārito Forest. Enter Operation Nest Egg.



## Why do bats matter?

Short-tailed bats are unique among all bat species, so unique that international bat specialists come here to study them, says Ali Beath. “I’m so privileged working with them. A lot of New Zealanders have never seen them, or even know they exist.

“While most bats catch their prey in the air, short-tailed bats, like many New Zealand birds, have adapted to hunting on the ground. They fold their front wings up and scramble around the forest floor.

“They are also unusual in that they’re omnivores and they are very important pollinators of some

of our native plants, including the rare pua-o-te-rēinga (*Dactylanthus* or wood rose).

“They are the only ‘lek breeders’ among small bat species, where the males gather to compete for females. Male bats ‘sing’ to attract a female. To human ears, this sounds like squeaking; with the ultrasonic frequency of a bat’s hearing, it probably sounds a lot better to a female bat.

“They are so cryptic, ugly as hell, but with attitude, and if we don’t look after them, that’s a whole amazing species that could go extinct. They are only found in New Zealand, and we have a moral duty to look after them.”



*Ali holding a short-tailed bat*



*Iain Graham attaching a transmitter to a kiwi*

Each breeding season, from about July to February, the team track rowi throughout Ōkārito Forest and collect eggs from their nests. These are carried – very carefully – out to Franz Josef, where they are incubated and hatched at the specialist West Coast Wildlife Centre. The young chicks are transported north to a predator-free island in the Marlborough Sounds, where they stay in a kiwi “crèche”. After six months to a year on the island, when the chicks have grown strong enough to fight off predators, they are transferred back home to Ōkārito.

For the biodiversity team, much of the rest of the year is occupied with tracking rowi to change their transmitters, given the batteries last just 12 months.

Sound simple? In fact, a huge amount of innovative technology, specialist knowledge, and sheer hard graft is involved. A key element in finding the rowi, across thousands of hectares of dense lowland rainforest, is a canny, purpose-

designed system called Skyranger, where the bird’s transmitter signals are detected from the air. A quick flight above the forest pinpoints the rowi. That data is relayed to a computer on the ground so the biodiversity team know where to find the nests and their all-important eggs.

Actually getting to the birds involves groundwork – lots of groundwork. Qualities for the job, says

Graham, include the ability to walk for up to 10 hours a day through rough, untracked forest terrain, carrying a pack of up to 20 kilograms. And you need to be comfortable alone in the bush. “There are good health and safety systems in place of course, but still, we need to be able to deal with anything that can happen.”

He absolutely loves the job. “I’ve always loved getting into the outdoors; now I get paid to!”

It’s also highly specialised and varied work. “I’m not just in Franz Josef. This work also involves visiting the predator-free islands for the kiwi crèche work and undertaking all the biosecurity required there. And I help with other kiwi programmes around the country.”

In case all that’s not varied enough, Graham is also part of DOC’s emergency response team. He’s helped fight fires in Canada and Australia, and just recently, was operations manager for Operation Tidy Fox, overseeing the massive rubbish clean-up from the flooded Fox River landfill.

And he’s realised his long-held aspiration to be a dog handler. “Dogs and their ability to track rowi have become an essential part of our work. A few years back, I had an opportunity to train up a six-month-old puppy, Rein, and for ten years now, she has been a valuable member of the rowi team. She is trained to indicate a kiwi’s location by pointing exactly to the bird or its burrow. This can save huge amounts of time for us. It also comes in handy when transmitters fail or when new birds need to be caught. Training a dog adds a whole new element to the work. It’s been really successful.”

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## ACTUALLY GETTING TO THE BIRDS INVOLVES GROUNDWORK – LOTS OF GROUNDWORK.

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As has the rowi programme. When Graham started, fewer than 200 rowi lived in a 12,000 hectare area of southern Ōkārito Forest. Now 600 birds inhabit some 24,000 hectares around Ōkārito, extending northwards. And it’s not stopping there, says Graham. “Each adult bird has a range of up to 80 hectares, so we’ve had to expand our specially protected kiwi zone to make room for them all. We’re now releasing birds into a new area in the Omoeroa Ranges around Lake Gault, near Fox.”

With the recent restoration of the historic Lake Gault Track, a partnership between DOC and the Fox community, it’s just possible that more people will get the chance to hear the call of a rowi, this now not-quite-so-rare kiwi.

## Biodiversity in Wellington

The Department of Conservation and the Wellington City Council are long-time supporters of Zealandaia, which has just been named by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 best places in the world to visit. As a result of Zealandaia, Wellington’s biodiversity is transforming. Zealandaia was created by people in the community. It is just one example of how communities, local government, and central government work together.





## WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID? RECONSIDERING PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNICATIONS IN THE INFORMATION AGE

*In June, the second Public Sector Digital Marketing Summit was held in Dublin, Ireland. It was an opportunity for public sector managers, policy advisors, and communication specialists to share their successes and their cautionary tales from the front. The day was full of practical advice and useful insights. It also provided a not-so-subtle reminder that how, when, where, and why government agencies communicate with the public has drastically changed in the past five years and that we haven't yet reached the crest of that change. SHELLY FARR BISWELL shares a few ideas and tips from the day.*

### Who's speaking for you?

*"Consumer behaviour has changed; you have no choice but to adapt."* – Paul Connors, national director of communication, Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE)

*"The days of 'no comment' are well and truly gone."* – Joanne Sweeney, author and founder of Public Sector Marketing Pros

It used to be that communications for a government agency was very simple: it was covered by a dedicated team, with any media or communications issues elevated to senior leadership as required. Those days (if they ever really existed) are no more. Communications is spread all through the organisation, and the key to it is digital communication.

**FOR SENIOR LEADERSHIP, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO BUILD AN ONLINE PRESENCE BEFORE THERE'S A PROBLEM.**

That doesn't mean you need to get your chief executive tweeting, but it does mean that the chief executive, along with other key roles, needs to have an effective digital communications presence. Depending on the work of your organisation, those key roles might include the chief scientist, operations manager, or principal advisors. (The Department of Conservation's Threatened Species Ambassador is an excellent example of a role that includes a strong digital communications presence.)

For senior leadership, it's essential to build an online presence before

there's a problem. I spoke to summit organiser and Public Sector Marketing Pros founder Joanne Sweeney about a recent high-profile incident. We talked about how the chief executive did all the traditional communications things correctly – released a statement on the organisation's website, did media interviews, provided a follow-up statement – but the situation went pear-shaped right from the beginning and was still garnering negative media attention several weeks later.



*Joanne Sweeney (left) signs copies of her new book.*

*Photo: courtesy of Public Sector Marketing Pros*

"Just think – if the chief executive had cultivated a social-media presence that was aligned with their organisation's values before this issue came up," Sweeney said, "the chief executive would have been seen as a trusted source by their stakeholders and had an opportunity to provide updates in real time, as opposed to looking as if they were in avoidance mode. As it was, the chief executive was already on the back foot when the story broke, which meant the media and detractors controlled the narrative and the public was left feeling unclear on what really happened."

### The power of authenticity

*"Not being genuine is worse than not doing anything."* – Tony Sheridan, social media and digital content officer, University of Limerick

Tony Sheridan from the University of Limerick gave some good insights on why it's important to be authentic. "It's refreshing. It's OK that we're not all brilliant, unique snowflakes online – just be yourself. That said, remember it's not

just young people who appreciate sincerity and humour." And the reality check, "Give people a reason to follow – or they won't."

### Engagement is the new communications

*"The public live their lives through their smartphones, and they expect two-way conversations."*

– Chris Ducker, founder, Youpreneur.com

*"Social media makes customer service a spectator sport."* – Justin Clarke, founder, JustSocial

"In the S-3 age [search, social, and smartphone], two of the greatest attributes a leader can have are the willingness to be transparent and the capacity to trust," Joanne Sweeney said. "I know it's a dichotomy, but you need to trust your staff to get it wrong, so they can get it right."

Sweeney said that trust should be underpinned by a solid digital communications strategy that all staff are familiar with, along with clear guidance and an openness to assess and learn from mistakes.



**Chris Ducker discusses the need to personalise social-media engagement**  
 Photo: courtesy of Public Sector Marketing Pros.



**Karen Henderson talks about riding the wave of the Derry Girls phenomenon**  
 Photo: courtesy of Public Sector Marketing Pros

Sweeney explained, “For many public sector roles, digital communications is now a regular part of their job. Whether that’s responding to queries, disseminating information, or monitoring channels to better understand an emerging issue. Yes, sometimes mistakes will be made. But that’s a compelling reason for the organisation’s leadership to have an established and authentic presence on social media, so the damage can be minimised.”

At the end of the summit, Justin Clarke, founder of JustSocial, summed up the need for the public sector to up their game in how they engage with social-media users. His suggestions included:

- Empower your people; give them ownership of the channels they manage. You will be rewarded.
- Always remember it’s called SOCIAL customer service for a reason. Be human. Show personality. Be authentic.
- Respond to as many people as you can as quickly as you can. They will appreciate it and remember it.

### Who are you talking to?

*“Google says that we have only reached 1 percent of the potential of digital technology. Much of the rest of that potential will be in data – how it’s gathered and how it’s used.” – Joanne Sweeney*

*“If content is king, listening is queen.” – Karen Henderson, sales and marketing manager, Visit Derry*

While some of your stakeholders will engage with your organisation directly through comments, direct messaging, liking (or not liking) content, or sharing your content, many others make up what Sweeney calls “the silently informed citizen”.

“Because people no longer need to request information – they can just find it through your website or another channel – many organisations aren’t aware of their potential audience before they engage with them,” Sweeney said.

There are tools that give you insights about your audience, but how many organisations are using those tools to good effect?

UK-based Google consultant and trainer Christina Brauer gave some practical advice on the power of data in helping agencies better understand their audiences.

## Just the facts?

*“Whitehall is to train comms professionals across the public sector to combat disinformation after the executive director of the Government Communications Service, Alex Aiken, warned that the problem poses a growing threat to democracy.” – Jonathan Owe, PRWeek, 10 April 2019*

While digital technology makes it possible for a more inclusive democracy, there is also a darker side.

Countering disinformation is an important part of any digital communications strategy. To do that effectively, organisations can start by implementing some of the advice suggested at the summit (ensuring key people within your organisation have a social-media presence, ensuring all your digital communications are authentic and aligned with your organisational values, and monitoring and analysing what’s being said across channels). All these things will help you build trust, which is your organisation’s greatest weapon against disinformation. In addition, it’s crucial that organisations discuss explicitly how disinformation is handled when developing a digital communications strategy.

In recognition of this shift, the UK’s Government Communication Service launched a RESIST Counter-disinformation toolkit (<https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/resist-counter-disinformation-toolkit/>) earlier this year, which provides agencies with useful information and suggestions.

At the end of the summit, Joanne Sweeney launched her book *Public Sector Marketing Pro*. With a background in journalism, Sweeney is a self-confessed policy wonk who wanted to help government agencies to achieve their goals. For communications professionals, the book is full of ideas for developing a successful digital communications strategy and includes step-by-step advice on how to implement that strategy. For managers, the book provides an insight into what can be achieved through digital communications – and why it’s vital to make it an organisational priority.

She said to start at the ending, “What does success look like? Who do you need to talk to in order to achieve success?”

She suggested regularly reviewing and reporting digital communications data by:

- picking measures for each channel (such as Facebook, Twitter, websites, and blog posts) that make sense for your organisation
- tracking those measures religiously in a dedicated report that is widely shared in the organisation so that the information can be used to make improvements
- comparing differences over time and between channels.

She added, that to optimise your digital communications, it's important to choose one measure and “make it your North Star”.

Adding, “Even if it's not a perfect measure, it's a place to start and will still allow you to measure things over time.”

### Are you really listening?

In addition to gaining a better understanding about who is accessing your communication channels, more and more organisations are using social-media listening tools to learn what's being said about topics that are relevant to their work, to find what communication channels their key audiences are using (and how), and to support crisis-management communications.

Used well, social-media listening can be of great benefit to citizens (identifying hot spots of infectious diseases or food poisoning, identifying and responding to spikes in crime or hate speech, tracing illegal dumping, and tracking biosecurity threats to name just a few).

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## MORE ORGANISATIONS ARE USING SOCIAL-MEDIA LISTENING TOOLS TO LEARN WHAT'S BEING SAID ABOUT TOPICS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THEIR WORK.

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At the same time, social-media listening is charting new territory in terms of privacy. The onus is on organisations to be transparent in how and why tools are being used and to conform with best practice in protecting citizens' rights.

## QUIT campaign

*There were several excellent case studies presented during the summit. Below is just one example of how an organisation has adapted to a changing communications environment.*

Similar to New Zealand's Smokefree campaign, Ireland has a QUIT campaign, which supports people to stop smoking. The campaign uses real-life stories to encourage smokers to quit. While the QUIT campaign has had a very good success rate (by 2017, Ireland boasted more ex-smokers than current smokers), the reality is that people who continue to smoke are difficult to reach. So the campaign decided on some innovative approaches to spread their message.

Digital channels, specifically Facebook, have been a big part of the campaign's programme. But as Muiriosa Ryan and Rachel Wright from Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE) explained at the summit, 2018 was a challenging year. It started with Facebook's algorithm change (prioritising active interactions, such as shares and comments, over passive interactions, such as likes and click-throughs), which had a major impact on social-marketing campaigns around the world. Then in March 2018 came the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal. During this period, HSE saw engagement on the QUIT campaign's Facebook page drop.



**Muiriosa Ryan and Rachel Wright explain how their team successfully used closed Facebook groups for Ireland's QUIT campaign.**

*Photo: courtesy of Public Sector Marketing Pros*

HSE took a look at its digital marketing strategy and knew that it was time to make some changes. They started by surveying smokers (aged 15 and over) to find out how people wanted support in quitting. While consultation with their own healthcare practitioners were people's top choices, text message support came in at 35 percent, and support delivered via WhatsApp or a closed Facebook support group came in at 31 percent.

As the QUIT campaign already offered support through text messages, the team decided to trial closed Facebook groups. Called The Quit Club, the closed Facebook groups were led by an HSE team member, and people signed up to participate. To evaluate the trial, HSE looked at quit rates achieved online compared with those from other forms of support.

For the trial, the closed Facebook groups ran for 12 weeks. The groups were made up of mainly women (86 percent). Nearly all (96 percent) had tried to quit before, and most (73 percent) had at least some tertiary education.

Looking at all the evaluation measures, the trial was a marked success. Importantly, at 27 percent, the quit rate was encouraging for such a new support channel. The HSE team found that after just three months, the groups had coalesced into positive support networks. Over half of the participants said they felt like they were part of a community, and nearly one-third of participants said they would keep in contact with someone from the group. One of the trial groups asked to continue as an informal Facebook group so that participants could continue to support one another.

Using data to assess their digital marketing approach, HSE has discovered that closed Facebook groups are another way to reach their audience and deliver on their objectives. The team is now looking at using closed Facebook groups for other health-related issues, including a champion community group for their Dementia: Understand Together campaign; a breastfeeding community; people living with chronic conditions; and additional quit smoking groups.



## GLIDING ON MARS – A FUTURE PUBLIC SERVICE

**Playwright and columnist DAVE ARMSTRONG takes an engaging look at the future of the public service.**

When considering what things might be like in 50 or 100 years, I suspect it's a good idea to consider what people might have thought about the future 50 or 100 years ago. In the 1920s, New Zealand had a public service that in today's language would be dubbed lean and mean.

### A public service on Mars

We were recovering from some minor recessions and a crippling war effort for the Mother Country. If you were old, unemployed, or a single mother, then life was hard and there was little assistance from the state.

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Māori were recovering from a massive population decrease and loss of land that had been going on since the 1840s. But as difficult as life was, once the Great Depression hit, many New Zealanders would look back nostalgically at the “roaring twenties”.

It wouldn't be until 1938 that social security, which underpins so much of our public service today, became a reality. Yet I wonder what the bespectacled, waist-coated, hat-wearing gentlemen who made up the majority of public servants in the 1920s would have thought about hot desks, mobile offices, agile courses, online censuses, co-design, office recycling strategies, and climate change mitigation. Imagine trying to explain to them how a mindfulness workshop operates.

I suspect that if someone had asked a 1920s public servant what they thought the public service would have been like in 100 years, they may have predicted it would be very similar to the 1920s but with extra branches on Mars and the moon.

### The “never again” generation

From the late 1930s, the state grew and so did the public service. By the 1940s, the state was heavily involved in just about every aspect of people's lives. This was partly because there was a war on and partly because the Depression caused an entire generation to vow “never again”. Forget individual wealth creation, the children of the Depression were more interested in a state that provided security if times got hard – something that wasn't there in the early 1930s.

Fifty years ago, the “RSA generation” (as those who grew up during the Depression and lived through World War II were known) were firmly in charge. Our 1970s' prime ministers – Jack Marshall, Norman Kirk, and Rob Muldoon – were all part of this generation.

Back then, even supposedly right-wing parties like National heartily endorsed the welfare state.

Public service numbers were high, and staff believed a job in the public service was a job for life. It's no coincidence that Roger Hall wrote *Glide Time* around this period. It was also in the 1970s that my parents encouraged me to train as a teacher. If my dreams of being a professional musician or writer fell through, I “could always rely on a government job”.

I suspect most public servants in 1983 would not have predicted the change that would occur in the next ten years, let alone the next 50, as Rogernomics and Ruthanasia gutted the public service.

So given the change in the size, function, and shape of the public service that has occurred over the last 100 years, how will things change over the next 100? In terms of size, that's anyone's guess and could depend on the sentiments of the government of the day. You could argue that after the savage cuts of the 1980s, the public service has remained much the same size. The only difference being that when there's a sinking-lid policy, contractor numbers go up, and when more permanent staff are hired, contractor numbers go down.

### The “real” public servant

Rather than simply guess about the future, some organisations have seriously researched the topic. Britain's Economic and Social and Research Council (ESRC) have teamed up with some researchers from the University of Birmingham to create a picture of the “21st Century Public Servant”.

CITIZENS DON'T WANT HIGHLY  
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Their research is very readable, apart from the odd phrase like “pema-austerity is inhibiting and catalysing change”. Rather than become obsessed with technological change, the researchers see “whole person approaches” as the model for a future public servant and the kind of person that people want to deal with. Citizens don't want highly trained technical specialists who are siloed away but flexible generalists who care about people.

They want humans, and when you look at how our society functions today – form letters sent out for all manner of things, hours spent by customers waiting on phones to talk to a person, organisations that exist only in an online cloud – you can understand why people want a “human touch”. For those interested in entrepreneurial activities, I would say there's quite a lot of money in humans.

Our overly automated world has got so ridiculous that I got invited to connect on LinkedIn the other day with one Dave Armstrong. A namesake? No, LinkedIn wanted me to connect with myself. Why?



recently pointed out in the *Washington Post*, “Though the aims of the Green New Deal are laudable, we do not yet have the technology needed to reach ‘net-zero greenhouse gas emissions’ in 10 years ... There is no clean substitute for jet fuel. Electric vehicles are growing quickly yet are still in their infancy. Manufacturing industries such as steel and chemicals, which account for almost as much carbon emissions as transportation, are even harder to decarbonise.”

Will we still be grappling with environmental issues in 50 or 100 years? Will we be scraping out the last of the fossil fuels because we still haven’t found a way to properly replace them? Will we, despite the predictions of 50 and 100 years ago, still be living on Earth, still be fighting needless wars, and still be seeing

growing racism and nationalism around the world? We also seem to be more neurotic than ever, and we still haven’t cured that common cold.

Well, Dave and I certainly have a lot in common. I suspect we’d get on quite famously. We could endorse each other for lots of things and write mutually glowing testimonials. You would think LinkedIn, being one of the biggest job search sites in the world, might have a human out there who would use their unique form of offline intelligence to prevent people being invited to connect with themselves, and other forms of online onanism.

The ESRC researchers also found that citizens didn’t want “heroes”, with great reputations and egos to match, running their public service. They wanted a more caring, collaborative approach, with knowledge shared, a team culture developed, and a flatter, less hierarchical structure. In other words, they want some things that were a feature of our public service in the 1950s and 1960s.

Researchers also talked about fluidity – that citizens want their public servants of the future to be agile, moving between departments and easily changing roles. When we compare today’s public service leaders with the old-style heads who often started in a department as a cadet, it’s fair to say we are rapidly moving to such as system. But could we be throwing out something good? Surely there is a place for people who have come up through the system and care about what their organisation does, as well as people who’ve apparently succeeded elsewhere and turn up with some glowing testimonials and a flash-looking MBA. The success of the former would appear to be a resounding “yes”.

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## THE ESRC RESEARCHERS ALSO FOUND THAT CITIZENS DIDN’T WANT “HEROES”.

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### The threat of upheaval

A feature of New Zealand in the last 100 years has been periods of stable activity interrupted by short periods of massive economic and social change. What we don’t know is what shape and form the next massive economic change will take. I’m guessing it will have something to do with the environment and climate change. It might take the form of an influx of climate change refugees from the Pacific and elsewhere, or it could see our entire economy move away from its reliance on meat and dairy products. How will our “market” economy cope with such change?

There is a lot of talk of jobs in clean technology, and some US lawmakers are calling for a Green New Deal. Yet the 5 million green jobs over 10 years that Barack Obama promised didn’t eventuate. As former Democratic Governor of Colorado John Hickenlooper

Ninety years ago, our capitalist system failed dismally with the 1929 Wall Street Crash. And although capitalism has been modified, it’s still the dominant system today. Some futurists talk about a more communal society where people work fewer hours and receive a universal benefit, which will ensure that wealth will be shared. Sorry, but I see little evidence of this happening.

Are we seriously to believe that in 50 or 100 years, social workers won’t be chronically underpaid, that the unemployed will not be blamed for their plight, that the police and judges will not be urged by politicians to “get tough” on crime, and that teachers will extol the virtues of governments that have funded them and their schools well?

### A dystopian future or a different one

Sadly, it seems that the dystopians have got more on their side than the utopians. Orwell’s *1984* is famous for what it gets right rather than wrong. I recently read *It Can’t Happen Here*, a novel by Sinclair Lewis. Written in 1935, it tells the story of a populist right-wing candidate who becomes US president. It could have been written during the 2016 US election campaign.

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## IN 100 YEARS, IT WON’T JUST BE GREEN SPACES, CLEAN AIR, AND GOOD FOOD THAT WILL BE IN GREAT DEMAND.

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But let’s not get too depressed. Today, we’re living longer than ever, and we are healthier. Though our race relations are far from perfect, more New Zealanders are embracing biculturalism and we are no longer the Little Britain we aspired to be at the beginning of the 20th century. The country that embraced universal suffrage in 1893 still values human rights and is largely seen as a progressive and tolerant nation.

Our public service still faces challenges, but in some areas, it is leading the way and is satisfying its clients. In 100 years, it won’t just be green spaces, clean air, and good food that will be in great demand. I suspect it will also be empathy, compassion, understanding, and the “human touch”. Let’s hope our future public servants provide these – and not staff restructures, baffling technology, and even more baffling jargon.

# SUPERDIVERSITY AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

***New Zealand has an increasingly diverse population – Auckland is considered one of the most superdiverse cities in the world. What does this mean for the public sector and how will it respond to a superdiverse New Zealand? MARGARET MCLACHLAN investigates.***

## Superdiversity in action

Within an hour of hearing the news of the Christchurch mosque attacks, Auckland Council's chief executive Stephen Town emailed all staff with the offer of going home, realising that's where many would want to be at that time.

The following week, he visited Muslim staff around the region, and a morning tea was hosted by the mayor Phil Goff and the city councillors, where a karakia was performed for the Muslim staff network.

"We received an overwhelming amount of support from Auckland Council after the Christchurch attack. At a time when the Muslim community was so devastated, our colleagues rallied around us with love and kindness," says the chair of the council's Muslim staff network, Anmar Taufeeek.

"Executive leaders met personally with our Muslim staff network to find out how we and our families could be best supported. Additionally, we were humbled to hear that the council was organising Auckland's remembrance for Christchurch at Eden Park too, and all staff were encouraged to attend."

Stephen Town says this response was indicative of the inclusive culture the council is deliberately fostering.



***Auckland Council's chief executive Stephen Town (in the orange hard hat on the left) with the Auckland Council team taking part in the Pride Parade***

"Auckland's rich diversity means that Auckland Council has an important role to play in creating a strong, inclusive, and equitable city.

"Understanding and responding to the needs of our people, customers, and community is at the heart of what we do. Being inclusive means intentionally addressing issues of access, equity, and participation. Achieving this requires a willingness to embrace change at an individual and system level.

"In 2017, we introduced our Inclusive Auckland (Diversity and Inclusion) Framework to drive change. I'm pleased with the progress we are making in reflecting and valuing Auckland's diversity in our

large workforce and also in how we engage with and respond to the diverse needs of Auckland's communities."

## A different world

Distinguished academic and sociologist Paul Spoonley says New Zealand's population is changing rapidly. He is currently based at the Max Planck Institute of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany. Together with international colleagues, he's enduring the heat of the European summer to research "what we're calling the diversification of diversity".

The last five years – 2014 to 2018 – had the largest net migration gains ever in New Zealand's history, with an estimated 270,000 more migrant arrivals than departures.



***Paul Spoonley***

Spoonley explains: "Two things are happening: firstly, the flow of migrants is much larger than in the past. We're getting a lot more people from a lot more countries. Auckland is the ultimate destination of 60 percent of migrants – it's one of the most superdiverse cities in the world. What this means for how we organise and manage New Zealand is significantly different from even ten years ago.

"Secondly, three-quarters of some communities, like the Chinese community, are born overseas. It's misleading to characterise [an ethnic group] as homogenous as there is a very diverse second generation of migrants, demonstrably different from their parents in terms of values."

Spoonley says over the first generation, immigrants can struggle to establish themselves in New Zealand, in terms of measures like education, income, owning property, and employment, but that changes significantly – mostly positively – in the second generation.

So what does this mean for the way the public sector interacts with its communities?

## Policy challenges

Lawyer Mai Chen chairs the Superdiversity Institute for Law, Policy, and Business and says the public sector needs to put a superdiversity lens on its work.

"Given that your customer is changing, what does that mean for what you have to do in terms of consultation and engagement? The answers are profound in terms of where and how the languages are used, for example.

"When you say 'all New Zealanders', what do you mean?" she says.

Chen says many agencies are waking up to the challenges of serving a diverse population. Her 2018 report *The Diversity Matrix* outlines the issue of multiple disadvantage. It argues for a more sophisticated analysis of diversity in terms of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and so on.

Without a superdiversity lens, departments could be serving a smaller population, she warns.



## How to engage with varying communities

Auckland Council believes engaging with its diverse communities is an important part of improving the quality of council's decision making and ensures it's hearing from all Aucklanders.

Head of Citizen Engagement and Insights Kenneth Aiolutepa says, "Our aim is to be as inclusive as possible when working with communities so that we can make better policy decisions and deliver better services for everyone."

"To genuinely achieve this goal, we offer a suite of different tools and initiatives so that Aucklanders can engage with council in ways they prefer."

"Our community partners initiative involves working with people and organisations who have trusted relationships within their own community to facilitate genuine engagement. Our partners can explain in their own language the work that council does, why it's important to participate, and how council actions or decisions will affect them."

He says this approach helps the council engage with members of different communities and get a sense of their views and what matters to them.

"Each group needs to be addressed uniquely, via the appropriate channels, to ensure their different perspectives are included. Our partners help us to recognise their community's needs, for example, whether they prefer using social media or interacting face to face or whether they need a longer lead time to provide feedback."

Kenneth Aiolutepa says the council has had a significant increase in feedback from diverse groups across Auckland when working with community partners. For example, the 10-year budget consultation in 2018, when compared with the consultation in 2015, saw more than triple the volume of feedback from Asian communities, more than double from Māori communities, and digital submissions increase from 27 percent to 52 percent.

"It's important to remember that our community partners are one of a variety of ways we engage, in addition to spreading word via opinion leaders, social channels, and ethnic media. Trialling new and innovative engagement approaches ensures we remain relevant to all of our communities. All of these aspects feed back into our goal of achieving inclusivity."

## Working with diversity

Paul Spoonley sees first-hand those agencies who are working hard to be inclusive. He's a judge of the Diversity Awards, organised by Diversity Works NZ. You can see the results of the recent awards at [diversityworks.nz](http://diversityworks.nz)

"When I look at companies [for the Awards], I'm looking for leadership, an explicit set of policies, those who collect data, and do evaluation. Some firms don't collect data on ethnicities [of staff or customers], so how will they know if they're successful? They need to ask questions like, 'Why are recent migrants in our contact centre but not customer services?' We have some wonderful examples of diversity, but there needs to be a lot more."

Spoonley says the public service is often headquartered in Wellington with Auckland operations.

"Given the significance of Auckland, I've seen a few government departments that are struggling to have good Auckland relations, especially delivering a service to new migrants."

"Between now and 2038, 60 percent of New Zealand's population will be in Auckland, the majority destination of our migration. We need to take that into account."

Auckland Council is walking the talk with its employees.

## Making diversity real

Fezeela Raza, Principal Advisor Diversity and Inclusion, Strategy, and Capability says, "One of the key ways we are embedding the diversity and inclusion framework into the business is to make sure we measure inclusion as a component in our annual staff engagement survey. While the survey has shown us that there is room for improvement, we are pleased that it is continuing to track upwards, with the latest score for diversity sitting at 78 percent."

The survey measures perceptions of employee's sense of belonging, their ability to be their whole selves at work, their ability to have a voice, and their perceptions of fair treatment for all.

"We are also seeking to make some significant changes to the leadership of our organisation, both in terms of who leads us and the way we lead. One of our goals is to work towards closely reflecting the make-up of Auckland's working population in our senior leadership team. We have set some clear targets for senior appointments, including a focus on inclusive recruitment practices and recruiting and progressing diverse talent."



*An Auckland Council consultation session*

The council is also running a range of capability-building initiatives for managers and teams to actively address unconscious bias and cultural intelligence.

Stephen Town says, "I remain hugely committed to this work and have made it one of my key objectives to ensure our diversity and inclusion change programme is embedded across the business and that progress continues towards our goals."

Responding to diversity clearly takes commitment and perseverance for organisations, but as our society grows increasingly diverse, it's a process we cannot afford not to do.

The website [superdiv.mmg.mpg.de](http://superdiv.mmg.mpg.de) shows the effect of immigration on the superdiverse cities of Vancouver, Sydney, and Auckland. Paul Spoonley has provided the Auckland data and analysis.

The website uses various tools to show diversity, including city maps to identify the connections between different types of diversity, maps of neighbourhood social geography and diversity "hot spots", and a dashboard tool that lets users explore how the demographic characteristics intersect with socio-economic status.

Spoonley says the tools can help users understand the complexity that results from the intersection of ethnic diversity with other forms of diversity, both between groups and within groups. And it highlights the elements that are particular to Auckland – an obvious one being the outcomes for Māori and Pasifika people relative to other communities.

## THE SPECIAL PLACE OF THE NGO

**Working with the public sector is a key function of NGOs. DAVID LARSEN caught up with two prominent managers of NGOs, Barbara Disley and David Hanna, to get their take on the relationship and the direction they'd like to see.**

"Allow us to fail," says David Hanna, which is not the reply I expected. After a high-level career in the public service, Hanna moved on to management roles in the NGOs Inspiring Communities and Wesley Community Action. I've just asked him to name the one biggest change he'd like to see in the public sector's approach to NGOs.

Freedom to fail? Really? Yes, he says, really. "The greatest asset we have as NGOs is that we have more flexibility than government agencies and more room to move. There's the capacity to give things a go and find out what works. What I find is the best way to advocate for a change of policy is just to get on and do it. Trial an approach, build a body of knowledge, adapt, change your methods to fit what you learn, and then if it works, people will be attracted to it. Politicians and senior officials like things that work, you know?"

**THE GREATEST ASSET WE HAVE AS NGOS IS THAT WE HAVE MORE FLEXIBILITY THAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND MORE ROOM TO MOVE.**

### Taking the risks and dealing with reality

Whatever government happens to be in power, they always talk about innovation, Hanna says. "But it's really hard for a government to innovate. In the current political system, it just isn't a wise investment of money. Whereas it's

different for a community organisation or some other third sector – anyone that has more flexibility. If a government is really smart, it's going to be flicking little pots of money out to lots of groups trying lots of things, and then seeing which ones get traction." Which implies, of course, that some of them will not get traction. Hence, the road to success will lie open only when you have permission to fail. In Hanna's experience, this is not always an easy licence to come by.



**David Hanna**

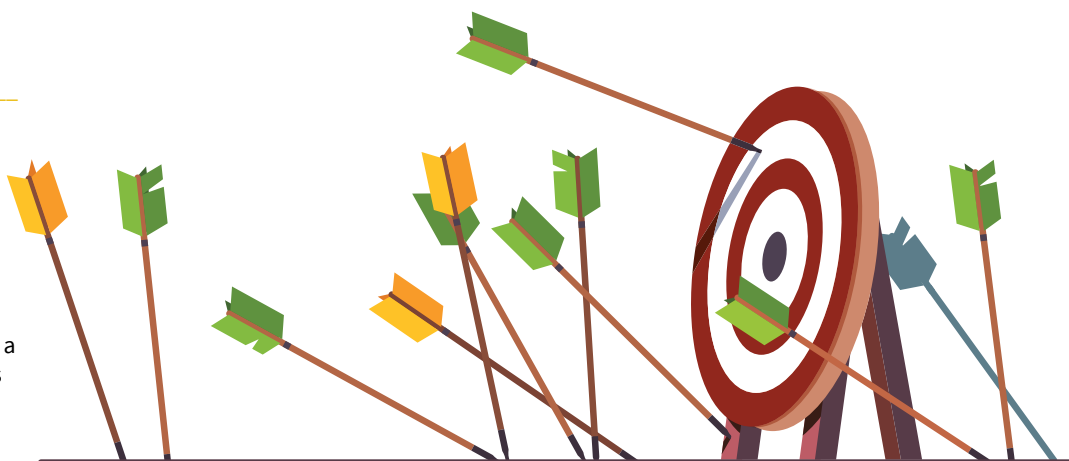
"My experience of being in the public service is that when you're a public servant, you're certainly aware that you're there for the public good. But also, first and foremost, you're aware of the rule that you don't embarrass your minister. Your job is to support the elected government. Sometimes – irrespective of which party is in power, this is a matter of system design – politicians will use intentional language such as 'we want to be highly collaborative', 'we don't

want government silos', 'we want departments to work together', 'we want collaboration', 'we want co-ordination'. You look back over the last 15 years, and variations on those themes are everywhere when politicians are talking about the public service. But when you're meeting one on one with your minister, the minister is saying, 'Listen, don't make me look like an idiot.' Because that minister is sitting on a cabinet ranking, and they're thinking about their position in their own system. So the classic shorthand for ministerial failure around Wellington is getting onto the front page of the *Dom Post* – that's the thing to avoid at all costs. And what that translates to as it goes down the food chain is that, as an official, if you're involved in a project and it doesn't work out the way you hoped, or if God forbid it's unsuccessful, you have an incentive to either write it up as a quasi-success or bury it. So for a government official looking at the complex issues, be it climate change, poverty, or whatever, there's a real risk in allowing yourself the adaptive thinking that you'd need to arrive at good solutions. Which I think is frustrating for a lot of smart government officials. They know all this stuff as well as I do, but they'll tell you, yeah, but we have a political process that gets in the way."

### Finding answers within communities

I asked Barbara Disley, a former deputy secretary at the Ministry of Education and now chief executive at Emerge Aotearoa, the same question: what is the one biggest change she'd like to see from government when dealing with NGOs?

"I'd like more of an awareness that no one has all the answers", she says. "Some government agencies are good at that, I



have to say, and are getting better. But I'd want to see more talking with communities and the people who are most likely to be impacted upfront before agencies come out with solutions."

Emerge Aotearoa's focus is on providing community-based mental health, addiction, and social housing services; Disley was the inaugural chair of the Mental Health Commission from 1996 to 2002, and through 2018, she served on the Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry Panel. "The biggest thing about the inquiry for me was what we learned about getting out and talking to communities, talking to people who use services, talking to families – finding out what works for them, what hasn't worked for them, what they think would work better. It's about engaging the people who are most affected. Because many of your best solutions are going to come from the very people the services are set up to support, who are sometimes seen as passive objects of the programmes someone is putting in place. Whether that be people who have spent time in prison, whether it be people dealing with Oranga Tamariki, whether it be health experiences, whatever the context – the one thing that would most change dynamics is not devaluing the voice of the people who are at the pencil-point end of the services."

David Hanna shares the sense that public sector agencies stand to gain a lot by listening more to the people their programmes serve. "Agencies tend to focus on problems. They go into a community and say this is a problem, and we've got the solution, and here it is. Or sometimes they say we think you're a community with this problem, now who wants to put their hand up to run this service in this community to fix this problem? And that's built an industry out of community organisations saying yes, yes, that's exactly what we do! This thing you're willing to pay for, by coincidence, that's exactly our expertise!"



Hanna observes that New Zealand has a rich history of people in communities taking the initiative and making things happen. "The playcentre movement began as a group of women in Palmerston North in the post-war period. The Kōhanga Reo movement came out of a group of elders at Waiwhetu Marae. These are New Zealand institutions that began with citizens saying here's an opportunity or here's an issue – we can be part of the solution. And at Inspiring Communities, we've noticed that if you ask them, communities will sometimes identify other issues from the ones being focused on in Wellington. It's easy not to ask, because your resources are often attached to the problem definition coming out of the public sector – so NGOs will tend to accept the premise and say yes, yes, we agree with that, we'll work on those terms. And often, if they do win the contract, they then have to go about quietly adjusting it to fit the local situation."

Very often, Barbara Disley comments, NGOs, since they work closely in communities, are the first to see the tangible impacts of changing conditions. "Either policy changes or environmental changes, we're there on the ground and so we are maybe in a position to flag those up before they'd otherwise be seen. I'm not saying necessarily that only we can do that. In the mental-health context, for example, it was no secret before the mental health inquiry that there were serious, widespread, and pervasive concerns from the community about what was happening in terms of access to services, responsiveness of services, a range of issues. Now the public sector was also aware of that. But that was one very clear example where a group of concerned people went out and did some work and pulled together a report [the *People's Mental Health Report* (2017)], which flagged up a range of issues around mental health services, which then led to the incoming government saying, we will have a much closer look at this."

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## AGENCIES TEND TO FOCUS ON PROBLEMS.

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### Bigger goals

Neither Disley nor Hanna has a definitive vision for the future of the NGO-public sector relationship. Definitive visions,

they both make clear, are more problem than solution: the people who know they have the answers are generally the people who fail to see the unexpected as it emerges.

"At all points and with all agencies," says Disley, "we value real dialogue and co-constructing solutions within communities. For me, co-construction is about getting clarity on the issues you are wishing to address and the outcomes you're seeking to achieve. And then working together, bringing the knowledge and value and information base and skills that come from both sides of the partnership. Because the bigger goal for an NGO is not just growing our income baseline or providing more services. The bigger goal is how do the people in a community have tino rangatiratanga and agency over their own lives? If we don't have that bigger goal in view, then as an NGO, I suspect we are failing in our obligations."

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## WE VALUE REAL DIALOGUE AND CO-CONSTRUCTING SOLUTIONS WITHIN COMMUNITIES.

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### The quiet providers

The income baseline is an inescapable issue. "I don't usually go on about it," says Hanna, "because it's too easy to go on about, but the level of resourcing is an acute problem at the moment. For a lot of the NGO sector, we're not like the nurses, we're not like the teachers – we're not a highly visible, organised workforce with some industrial might. We're more like the cafe workers; we're hard to organise, we're widely distributed, we're quite dynamic. So over the last period, the resourcing has become really tight. I think government knows that, but we're not a big noisy problem for them, and so we become easy to leave till last. We're the end of the line. Government needs to understand the strategic value of the sector. Because we're not just service providers. The people who provide the service are the people who end up knowing how the service works. That's the value-add."



# ARE YOU READY FOR ETHICAL CONSUMERISM ON A NATIONAL SCALE?

**Small changes can have big consequences. MICHAEL WORTH of Grant Thornton takes a close look at the government's new procurement rules and comes out wondering where it might lead.**

Four small tweaks to the government procurement rules – you'd think there was nothing to talk about. Yet the flow-on effects from the changes are so significant they have the potential to transform New Zealand's entire economy.

When you consume \$41 billion in goods and services each year, any change in the way you shop has the power to put the whole market on notice.

## Conscious consumerism is changing the way we spend

Traditionally, the procurement process has focused on obtaining value for money directly from the good or service. Then came a focus on good planning and management, fairness, whole-of-life cost, and transparency. But modern consumers want more from their products and services. They want sustainability. They want ethical production methods. They want to know that what they're buying isn't going to damage the earth, contribute to modern slavery, or undermine animal welfare. They'll even boycott or protest a company that is utilising practices deemed unethical.

Conscious consumerism is about voting with your dollar; shoppers are increasingly happy to pay more for products and services that contribute to social good. Consumer dollar voting has driven the rise of free-range bacon, traceable infant formula, biodegradable cleaning products, and millions of other goods. Its influence is felt in every sector, every product, and every service.

We already know this government is aiming to embrace many of the principles that guide conscious consumers. The 2019 Wellbeing Budget demonstrated this comprehensively; in essence, it said, "We're prepared to spend more in an effort to address ethical concerns."




## Public value and a new Supplier Code of Conduct

That approach has now been extended into its procurement rules. The fourth edition includes changes in four main areas, which will come into effect 1 October this year:

1. New rules on procurement capability, reporting, and planning
2. Targeting public value though considerations of broader outcomes
3. Changes to construction procurement and industry upskilling
4. Removal of three outdated rules.

There has also been the introduction of a Government Procurement Charter, setting out the government's expectations of how agencies should conduct procurement activity. Among other expectations, agencies should look for new and innovative solutions by not over-prescribing tender documentation and by giving businesses opportunities to demonstrate their expertise.

The government has also put together a Supplier Code of Conduct, which sets out new expectations in the areas of:

3rd Ed: value for money	 Good price	Upfront price	The price paid at the sourcing of the good or service
		Ongoing and end of life	Lifetime costs of the goods, services and works
4th Ed: public value	 Good quality	Effective	Meets objectives of the agency/public need
		Efficient	Delivered in the right way, and within a reasonable time frame
	 Broader outcomes	Economic	Market and supplier skills training and development
		Social	Benefits to groups like Māori, Pasifika, regional and social enterprises
		Environmental	Support low-emissions and low-waste economy
		Cultural	Partnering with Māori

Source: Government Procurement Rules, 4th Edition

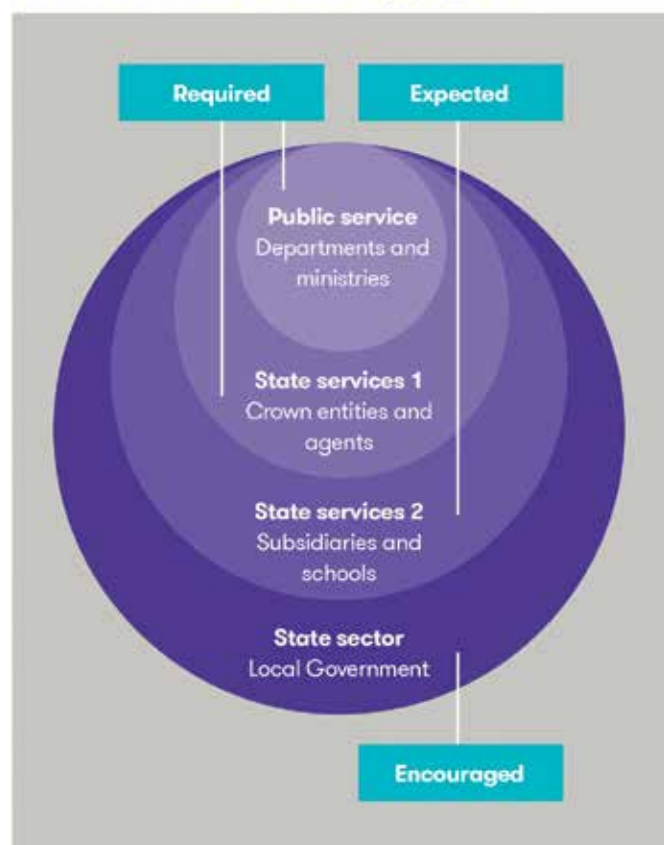
- ethical behaviour
- labour and human rights
- health and safety
- environmental sustainability
- corporate social responsibility.

These will all be influential, but perhaps the biggest change is in the category of “broader outcomes”. The five principles of government procurement remain in place, with each expanded to include elements of public value. That means using resources economically and taking into account the net benefits of a procurement, its contribution to specific results, and the broader outcomes for the country.

### What do these changes mean for government agencies?

In short, agencies will need to consider many more factors when they undertake procurement and find a balance between value for money and broader outcomes. Many suppliers will need to be asked about their supply chains, their workforce planning, and their emissions, among other things. There will need to be more reporting to MBIE and more supplier audits to ensure compliance, which might require tracing a supply chain as far back as New Zealand’s border. Agencies will need to consider tricky issues such as how to deal with suppliers changing sub-contractors mid-contract and how to encourage New Zealand business participation – while not breaking international treaty obligations.

## Who do the rules apply to?



Source: Government Procurement Rules, 4th Edition

The preferred supplier panels have been streamlined, but it’s going to be more difficult to use suppliers outside of some panels; in some designated contracts an exemption might be required. Simultaneously, agencies will be expected to look more broadly for involving local businesses, social enterprises, and Māori or Pasifika organisations in supply chains.

Public service entities and Crown entities and agencies must follow all the procurement rules. For other state sector entities, the rules are either “expected” or “encouraged”, but our understanding is that ministers are pretty determined for these agencies to achieve full compliance to the new rules.

All agencies will need to adhere to the new Government Procurement Charter, as well as the five Principles of Government Procurement. This is a less-prescribed way of instructing smaller public sector entities that they should be aligned to government objectives – but they have flexibility in how they do it.

The rules outline seven designated contracts. One of these is for agencies to measure and reduce their fleet emissions. This is low-hanging fruit as far as the government is concerned; it’s easily quantifiable, and agencies are expected to have emissions-free fleets by 2025/26.

Agencies are going to be busy. Not only will fleet managers be shopping for hybrid and electric vehicles, but procurement teams will have to consider new tenders and supplier audits. We would expect to see them recruiting new team members and upskilling to meet their extra responsibilities.

### Leading change from the top down

With the right planning, leadership, and execution, the new procurement rules should lead New Zealand towards a more sustainable future and drive local business and investment. But change won’t be immediate; the suppliers who can start showing alignment to the new objectives are likely to start winning more government tenders after 1 October. Smaller suppliers and subcontractors will likely follow suit as the new broader objectives start to shape New Zealand supply chains.

Similarly, the biggest government agencies are already working on adopting the new rules – in some cases their procurement teams helped to shape them and the rules are just catching up; they will likely lead the way in developing standard operating procedures for implementing the new rules. Their work will blaze a trail for smaller agencies to follow.

And on an even wider scale, the government’s conscious consumerism is leading by example for the rest of the market. By using its \$41 billion consumer power for good, I think we can expect to see the market move in step.

For more insights about the new procurement rules, visit [grantthornton.co.nz](http://grantthornton.co.nz)



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