

# Submission to the NZ Productivity Commission – More Effective Social Services –

## **From:**

Inspiring Communities  
Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki  
Great Start Taita  
Good Cents Porirua



Thank you for the opportunity to input into your inquiry. We note the key role that community-led development approaches must play **alongside** social services in order to effectively and efficiently address complex community issues and improve social outcomes in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Community-led development (CLD) is not a model or service - it is a planning and development approach based on five key principles:

1. A shared local vision.
2. Focus on utilising existing strengths and assets.
3. Many sectors and layers working together.
4. Building diverse and collaborative leadership.
5. Adaptive planning and action informed by outcome measures.

## **Community-led Development matters because:**

- the current approach is achieving limited gains – the dominant Government model to address problems is focused on deficits and purchasing services to fix the problem. This approach can increase dependence on external resources as opposed to building on existing capability in people and places.
- increasing integration and co-ordination between government agencies and service providers alone will not lead to achievement of social outcomes - local people and communities need to be more active in determining local solutions.
- complex social issues are best addressed by the ‘whole system’ working together.
- there are un-tapped resources and assets (financial and non financial within communities that can be better harnessed by working in locally-led ways.

When integrated alongside social investment and social service delivery strategies, community-led approaches can significantly strengthen social infrastructure and lessen the need for expensive professionalised services. Therefore a CLD thinking and analysis lens **needs** to be part of the Commission’s forward brief.

We wish to reiterate the key points we recently made in our Briefing to the Incoming Government:

1. ***Leverage Community Capacity*** - all communities have significant capacity to contribute to their positive development but this capacity is not currently being effectively released. While a certain level of core social service provision is essential to highly functioning communities, the next biggest gains in social outcomes will not come from government-led ‘build or buy’ approaches or efficiencies in the social

services 'market.'

2. **Mandate for CLD** - there needs to be greater recognition and mandate for community-led approaches and support for 'innovation' hubs in local places that activate, support and umbrella a wide range of locally-determined initiatives, programmes and capacity building efforts.
3. **Strategic Pipeline** - Government needs to work more proactively with philanthropic funders and business to create a pipeline funding approach to better support locally-led solutions and action for social change.
4. **Understand the 'How'** - focusing not just on what social services are delivered but HOW is key to improving social service outcomes. Key elements of the 'how' include engaging and working with people in empowering, strengths based ways to enable them to become agents of their own change rather than be passive recipients of services.
5. **Partner not Driver** - Government needs to let go of total power in collaborative initiatives and enable governance, investment and action planning approaches to be locally-responsive and more self determining. While central government is a key partner and participant in local planning and change efforts, it can not and should not seek to specify or control everything that happens.
6. **Relationships and Connections**- we note that small change on a wide scale have significant potential. This change is frequently invisible to the main systems or old way of doing things. It's locally driven, leverages off connections between people, and can significantly increase the productivity and effectiveness of existing Government investments in communities. New diverse models of organising and leadership are required to successfully tap this potential, including active citizenship, participatory democracy, collaborative community governance and co-production.
7. **Sharing Knowledge and Building New Skills** - better social outcomes will require more exchanges to share knowledge, practice and ideas between sectors and (government, community and business) and communities. Similarly additional training within the social sector (both central government and contracted service providers) is required to develop new knowledge and skillsets for working with complexity and in ways that enable local people and communities to be their best.
8. **Measure and Count What Matters** - data is recognised as an increasingly powerful tool for motivating collaboration and collective action. There is a need for more diverse monitoring frameworks and use of local level data sets to capture changes in both social infrastructure **and** social service level outcomes. It is also important that both practice-based evidence and evidence based practice are valued equally in Government's social policy, planning and purchasing frameworks.

The evidence from community-led practice in this country is collaborative working by business, government and local communities can create effective responses to social challenges such as child poverty, violent crime, unemployment and educational underachievement. Examples of locally-led achievements are noted in the following table and short case studies that follow.

## Communities Face Complex Challenges

### What's Changed:


### What's Enabled Change:

<p><b>Small towns in decline</b></p> <p><b>Mataura</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's readiness for school increased from 20-80% in 3 years</li> <li>• Community events engaging 85% of local people</li> <li>• 65 families now fed from community garden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• honest, open and transparent communication</li> <li>• a local task force that set priorities and championed strengths based action</li> <li>• new collaboration between residents and agencies/organisations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Failing schools and disconnected communities</b></p> <p><b>Victory Village, Nelson</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School roll turn over has dropped from 65% to 10-15%</li> <li>• Student achievement and attendance levels have continued to increase</li> <li>• 90% involvement by families in 3-way learning conferences</li> <li>• 13 new resident-initiated activities catalysed in 2014</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school philosophies of enrolling a family and 'everyone matters'</li> <li>• a community hub (co-located school-health-community facility) committed to being 'the first stop' &amp; supporting local families</li> <li>• proactively supporting and enabling local residents' needs <b>and dreams</b>.</li> <li>• local people believing in their own capacity to better manage health and wellbeing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Breaking poverty cycles</b></p> <p><b>Good Cents Porirua</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150+ low income individuals/families now experiencing a fundamental shift around their money and futures, and leading their own change and transformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helping those with debt own their situation and be their own change agents</li> <li>• professionals not problem solving for people</li> <li>• intentionally building relationships and having fun</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transforming a local economy and community</b></p> <p><b>Opotiki</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated planning co-led by iwi and local Council to enable community transformation through economic and social development.</li> <li>• Regional partners co-investing locally \$25m in Opotiki Harbour development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nurturing collaborative cross-sector leadership around a common local vision</li> <li>• investing in relationships locally, regionally and nationally</li> <li>• persistence, patience &amp; long term commitment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Creating neighbourhoods that care</b></p> <p><b>Tiākina ō Tātou Tamariki - Kaiti, Gisborne &amp; Gonville, Whanganui</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Gonville - half the neighbourhood engaged in locally-run activities, with 1/3 putting their hands up to help organise them.</li> <li>• In Kaiti - 100% of residents say they enjoy living there (up from 67%), 31% reduction in local crime in last 3 years.</li> <li>• Reduced reliance on outside professionals being paid to support vulnerable families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mobilising resident-led action and leadership</li> <li>• intentionally building social capital - trust and relationships in streets, which has catalysed local self help networks</li> <li>• accessing statutory agency data at street level</li> </ul>

## Case Studies: Enhancing Social Outcomes

### 1. Applying Community-led Development to Engage a Village in Keeping Children Safe

Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki - based in Kaiti, Gisborne and Gonville, Whanganui and held by Te Ora Hou Aotearoa.

<p>Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki focuses on two neighbourhoods that have had high incidence of child maltreatment; avoidable injury and hospitalisation; youth offending; family and street violence. The project employs a 'Community Animator' based in the respective communities to facilitate a range of engagement and mobilisation activities that encourage greater social cohesion, cooperation, concern, action and care between neighbours.</p>	
<p><b>Who's Involved:</b></p>	<p>Local residents, supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Te Ora Hou Aotearoa &amp; Te Ora Hou Te Tairāwhiti</li> <li>- local schools and ECE services</li> <li>- local authorities (Gisborne District Council, Whanganui District Council, DHBs, PHOs, iwi authorities)</li> <li>- central government agencies (DIA, NZ Police, Min of Justice, ACC, Housing NZ, etc.)</li> <li>- JR McKenzie Trust &amp; The Todd Foundation</li> </ul>
<p><b>What makes it work:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making '<b>neighbourhood</b>' the locus of intervention – rather than individuals or families etc.</li> <li>• <b>Spreading the word</b> to raise awareness about the nature of key issues and strengths (e.g. family violence, child abuse and neglect, youth offending, etc.)</li> <li>• <b>Intentionally building connections and mobilising the community</b> to become engaged in developing and implementing plans that address priority issues (e.g. neighbourhood events)</li> <li>• <b>Growing resources (people)</b> to actively help each other and local kids, with a focus on growing resident skills and capacity rather than rely on external professionalised help.</li> <li>• <b>Accessing statutory agency data</b> at CAU and meshblock/street level creates ownership of community profile in terms of welfare, health, education, crime, employment and social capital.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What's Changed:</b></p>	<p>Comparisons of 2010 and 2013 neighbourhood surveys in Kaiti show promising positive movements in social capital indicators and corresponding statutory agency statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• residents who said they enjoy living in the neighbourhood increased from 67% to 100%</li> <li>• residents who knew the names of more than 10 children in their street rose from 12% to 38%</li> <li>• residents who reported having done something social with their neighbours increased from 51% to 69 %.</li> <li>• reduction in tenant transfer requests in both neighbourhoods</li> <li>• neighbourhood crime overall crime down 31% compared to 4% drop in broader Eastern Policing District</li> <li>• average of 300 residents participating in 6 weekly 'Stone Soup' neighbourhood gatherings in Gonville, with 'Korero Corner' sparking a wide range of neighbourhood-led projects from community gardens to driver licencing courses.</li> </ul> 
<p><b>A Story of Locally-led</b></p>	<p><b>Gonville</b> - Residents in Gonville successfully advocated for a local playground to be developed in the neighbourhood and were invited by Council to choose their</p>

<b>Change:</b>	<p>preferred design from three project tenders. Whanau identified mitigation strategies for dealing with unsocial behaviours that may arise at the new park which opened in October 2014.</p> <p>A small team of volunteer gardeners is working with families inspired to become 'kai gardeners'. Donated gardening supplies have enabled local families to establish back yard gardens, and help is provided until whanau have the confidence to 'go it alone' with their garden.</p> <p><b>Kaiti</b> - The Community animator in Titirangi has worked with residents, the Council, local business owners and Kaiti School on a range of neighbourhood revitalization projects including public art projects, coffee groups, a street renaming project and fruit forest. Not only has community pride increased but so has care and concern neighbours are now showing for each other. Social isolation has reduced along with reliance on outside professionals paid to support vulnerable families.</p>
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## 2. Applying Community-led Development to Address Personal Debt

*Good Cents - based in Porirua and held by Wesley Community Action.*

Good Cents focuses on growing financial wellbeing for low income communities in Porirua. A key part of the initiative is the Good Cents course. Created to enable a paradigm shift in thought and action for local people experiencing severe financial hardship, people begin a journey of personal development, setting new goals and regaining control of their finances. Through taking a strengths based approach and creating a group based learning setting, each intake of 6-10 low income participants are empowered to become agents of their own change. Relationships between course participants are also intentionally strengthened as part of the learning process to enable community support systems to also be activated and grown.

<b>Who's Involved</b>	<p>Work and Income</p> <p>Local churches and cultural groups</p> <p>Local NGOs</p>
<b>What makes it work:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A focus on internalising the locus of control (people are not victims of their situations – they are primary agents of change for their situation)</li> <li>• People maintaining ownership of their lives rather than deferring to a culture of professionalization and efficiency.</li> <li>• The centrality of relationships and fun – even where it wouldn't normally be expected.</li> <li>• A Partners for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS) approach means course participants are constantly evaluating their own learning and change.</li> </ul>
<b>What's Changed:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 + low income individuals/families now experiencing a fundamental change in their approach to money and their futures. From victims, to leading their own change and transformation.</li> <li>• Following completion of the 8 week Good Cents course, participants report their sense of wellbeing in respect of their finances has improved by an average of 45%.</li> <li>• Random follow-ups with past participants demonstrate anecdotal evidence that after 2 years financial wellbeing changes are being sustained eg. not needing hardship grants, paying off debts, making savings etc.</li> <li>• Former course graduates are both teaching the course and also exploring practical ways they can 'give back' to support others in the Cannons Creek community.</li> </ul>

**A Story of Locally-led Change:**

Alongside personal stories of change, other important shifts have taken place. For example, asked how they might collectively support Money Week in 2013, a group of 15 course graduates created their own video clip [Money: Making Change](#) (including backing song, filming) to share their advice and wisdom for others. And as a result of learning from the Good Cents journey, host organisation Wesley Community Action has made some fundamental changes at its Cannon Creek site. Its foodbank is now a community pantry, with land surrounding the social service site turned into a large community garden. In addition, 65 new back yard gardens have been supported and a new food co-op created in mid 2014 has 300 members after just 5 months.



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### 3. Applying Community-led Development to Grow Skills and Self-help

*Great Start Taita -based in Taita and held by the Great Start Taita Charitable Trust.*

Great Start is working alongside Taita residents to grow a connected community where people feel safe and welcome and are developing answers for their own lives. Knocking on 1200 local doors in 2008 highlighted the need for a local hub that created connections rather than just provide traditional services to/for local families. As a result, the Great Start approach is based on a very different model of family and community support – it’s a children and family centre, for the community by the community.

<p><b>Who’s Involved</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families with young children</li> <li>• Local churches, community, and cultural groups</li> <li>• Social service, health and education providers</li> </ul>
<p><b>What makes it work:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not seeing local residents as clients.</li> <li>• Focusing on people more than services – how to support them, grow them, foster a culture of reciprocity and belonging.</li> <li>• Assisting residents to develop locally-led projects and ‘give back’ to their community.</li> <li>• Actively connecting local services and organisations to grow collaboration, integration and innovation that supports local community aspirations.</li> <li>• A culture of action and reflection within the staff team to intentionally learn and understand ‘how things’ happen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What’s Changed:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local residents (including children) have designed a new local park, created a toy library, time bank, established play groups, a community garden, new baby welcome packs and cross cultural friendship groups and more. Collaboration efforts have involved 2000+ people and grown 40 new alliances.</li> <li>• Outreach services (eg.Housing NZ) are provided from the Great Start base.</li> <li>• Influenced by Great Start thinking and philosophies (collaboration, empowerment, community-led), the culture of ‘how’ things happen in Taita has changed. For example, rather than compete against each other for registrations, a new Tamariki Taita (early learning network) has emerged with 18 different services now working together on a common goal of ensuring quality learning activities and experiences and collaborative support for local families.</li> </ul>

**A Story of Locally-led Change:**

While many local people first connect with Great Start by accessing family support services, these 'soft doors' become entry points for growing personal skills, leadership and community contribution. For example Danielle initially engaged with Great Start through the SPACE programme for new mums and babies. She continued contact through playgroups and was encouraged to take on the role of Toy Library administrator. Her growing confidence has seen her step up to lead Stay and Play group sessions in both Taita and Stokes Valley. Danielle and other local residents say that feeling part of the community was key to being able to contribute to it and give back.



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The picture opposite was drawn by a local Taita woman reflecting on the positive impact that Great Start has had on her life – and that of her family. Once a struggling refugee Mum, she's now thriving, and is being supported by Great Start to complete her early childhood training.

