

Ōpōtiki District Council Submission – A Fair Chance for All November 2022

Ōpōtiki District Council welcomes the interim report of “A Fair Chance for All” and the opportunity to contribute.

Statistics clearly reveal the Ōpōtiki District as one of Aotearoa’s most persistently disadvantaged, and we are hopeful that improved public policy and management will be reoriented to:

- a) ensure alignment with locally led aspirations and plans for wellbeing expressed in strategic and multiyear plans led by Councils and Iwi, and
- b) help unlock and amplify (rather than ignore or minimise) local wisdom and capability

and that:

- c) more attention will be paid to the experience, knowledge and capabilities of those leading public policy and management, to ensure they have a good understanding of complexity and change, and that a prerequisite to their involvement is they are well versed in the sectors which their policy and management will impact.

An instructive experience:

Nearly two decades ago Ōpōtiki District Council took decisions to strongly back local Iwi, Te Whakatōhea, aspirations to rebuild a marine based economy as a way to create local jobs and wealth and improve whānau and community wellbeing.

Council took on the leadership role to secure consents and funding to construct enabling infrastructure to this new industry - a new Harbour entrance which will provide safe passage for vessels at all tides, so that produce can be processed locally. The local community strongly supported this and both Iwi and Council adopted long term plans to enable realisation of the shared aspirations.

However, there was no central government hallway leading to public policy or management to awahi these locally led aspirations and plans for a sustainable future and improving Māori wellbeing. It took thirteen years of advocacy, patient briefing and education of an ever-revolving door of public servants. It took five business cases to eventually secure government investment for Te Ara Moana a Toi.

In the same timeframe Te Whakatōhea and Te Whānau ā Apanui Iwi have researched, are leading investment, and with community support, are rapidly growing a thriving and future focussed aquaculture industry. These are important cornerstones of Aotearoa’s Aquaculture strategy.

This submission leverages learnings from the years of Council’s experience of **public policy settings and public management systems** in this endeavour, and suggests some important principles and concepts to help:

- Re-think overall system settings to prioritise equity, wellbeing and social inclusion
- Re-focus public accountability settings to activate a wellbeing approach

- Broaden and embedding a wellbeing approach across policy making and funding frameworks
- Enable system learning and improvement through monitoring and evaluation

We invite the Inquiry panel to visit and engage with us.

Important Principles for the Inquiry to include	
Take a concerted focus on place	<p>Place, communities are where we experience life and wellbeing. All places have natural and built environments, and people who live, work, play and invest there. Whānau, Hāpū, Iwi, and local government are always key stakeholders in “place”.</p> <p>Each place is unique with its own history, mix of stakeholders, people with lived experience of intergenerational disadvantage and people and organisations who help perpetuate that in various ways. All are part of the challenge and are potential contributors to designing and creating solutions.</p> <p>Historical relationships with central government and different places can also have a bearing on how new policies or managers received.</p> <p>Public policy and management needs to embrace and connect with place, and routinely seek to understand how changes impact there.</p>
Respect the legitimate roles and plans of whānau, hāpū and Iwi and local government.	<p>Tangata whenua and local communities have aspirations, plans and long-term strategies designed with and for their communities. They have multiple accountabilities.</p> <p>Local government in particular has to follow stringent processes laid down by central government to engage community in long term and annual planning, and to regularly report on progress. Sadly, there is no corresponding requirement on central government to engage with, plan and report to communities in this way.</p> <p>Public policy and management systems need to develop deeper understanding of these plans and ensure alignment of new or amended policies, processes or resources.</p>
Lived experience managing in different sectors are essential prerequisites to making sensible public policy and management	<p>Central government policy and management is frequently remote from people and communities of Aotearoa. It is often steeped in colonised mindsets and frames of reference and can lack experience or understanding of the sectors and people it will impact.</p> <p>It is vital the machinery of government ensures senior public servants leading policy and management, that will impact on local government or other sectors, have recent and significant senior level experience working in that sector.</p>

	<p>If this is lacking, it's important input from the impacted sectors in local and regional Aotearoa settings is sought and included when developing policy or new management processes.</p>
<p>Embrace complexity – and the time it will take</p>	<p>Persistent disadvantage is a complex challenge which has developed over generations. There is no single, or quick, fix.</p> <p>Addressing complex issues demands collaborative multi-sector effort at every level of systems, in place, and over sustained time periods. This needs to happen at every level – across government agencies at national, regional and local levels, and with and across sectors in communities.</p> <p>Public sector policy and management needs to integrate across social, economic and cultural spheres and work alongside and relationally with local leadership over time. Single year contracting is not productive.</p> <p>Working in complexity for sustainable change demands curiosity and a “not knowing” mindset at times.</p> <p>Often the most important role missing is the facilitation/co-ordination function, with the capacity and resources to ensure all voices are heard, and respected. Those experiencing disadvantage are vitally important contributors to creating change. Yet they are so frequently ignored.</p>