



New Zealand Recreation Associations' Declaration National Conference, Wellington, 18-20 October 2010

After 2009's conference "Bridging the Gap" which focussed on bridging the gap between recreation and a multitude of other disciplines, this year's "CONNECT...the dots" was a logical follow on. Last month's Conference presented opportunities to hear from professionals from within and outside the sector as they discussed the ways in which we can CONNECT ourselves to other sectors for mutual benefit. The focus over the three day event was on CONNECTing policy and practice, politics and programmes, you and your colleagues.

During a time of much change politically with last month's elections and the National Government progressing policy amendments, as well as the changes to the Auckland region's governance structure and the effects of Canterbury's devastating earthquake, we've seen recreation professionals unite, share good practice and move forward together as an industry. To remain a strong and sustainable industry into the future, the sentiment has to be that the recreation sector must position itself in community plans and national programmes to really take advantage of the opportunities that the coming period of growth will afford.

The first speaker to tackle this idea was keynote speaker Professor Marilyn Waring, Chair Public Policy, Auckland University of Technology, with her compelling presentation on *Genuine Progress Indicators, Valuing Recreation*. Using the concept of Flashmobs - large groups of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform a choreographed act and then disperse - she explained how dance and recreation are unifiers and connectors of communities. We are all political, she argued, and should be prepared to act politically as we *Connect the dots* with recreation. She urged recreation professionals to be at the forefront - to not be shy - in realising their place in the world, especially in relation to decision making.

She also looked at the homogenising effects of GDP reports on social development, claiming that they do not provide good measures of how communities are actually faring and should not be used as measures of wellbeing. Instead, wellbeing needs to be detailed in relation to the specific population with which you are working. She pointed to her work with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (<http://www.ciw.ca/en/Home.aspx>) and the importance of finding narratives for establishing differences between what is beneficial versus what is harmful in regards to a particular approach towards wellbeing. We cannot assume that what we think is vital for wellbeing will apply across the board to all New Zealanders. We must consider the diversity of the population, and look for an approach that embraces the human rights of the whole population, taking into account minority groups, ethnic groups, and the like. It isn't enough, she argued, to just provide recreation facilities and services, we also need to strategise so that the needs of the whole of society are met. Finally, she urged delegates to think outside the square and to try to break free of the gender and class driven tendencies in the provision of recreation.

Following on from Waring was another keynote presentation on *Valuing Sport and Recreation* by Paul Dalziel, Professor of Economics at Lincoln University and Dr Sue Walker, Manager of Research for SPARC. They gave an overview of the 2009 SPARC-commissioned study to produce updated, new

and comprehensive information on the value of sport and recreation in New Zealand. The speakers discussed the implications of the study, completed by the NZ Institute of Economic Research. Dalziel looked specifically at the economic contribution of sport and recreation to New Zealand, arguing that they have a positive economic impact on the country. Walker focussed on the harder to measure values of sport and recreation by looking at a case study – the Norths Rugby Club in Porirua. These “soft values” include value for individuals on many levels (well-being, self-respect, career benefits), value for families (strengthening through generations), and value for communities (involvement of many people, local pride). They then mapped out a path for future work to improve our understanding of what the value of sport and recreation really is from the community to the national level and beyond.

Suzie Dale, Director of Research, The Nielsen Company, NZ challenged the audience with her keynote presentation on the *Future of Fitness*. Dale was the lead researcher on *Future of Fitness*, a white paper commissioned by Les Mills International which brings together data, expert opinion and informed speculation to form a view of the future of the global fitness industry. She spoke about the trends that will potentially shape human fitness and activity in the future and argued that the challenge to all who deliver recreation and fitness services is to keep relevant as these changes occur. She pointed to advances and innovations in science, medicine and technology as key drivers of the changing fitness industry. Because definitions of fitness and recreation are rapidly changing, we need to if not embrace, at least be aware of these changes and remain relevant by improving our offerings to a broader audience.

The next keynote address was from Mansoor Khawaja, Principal Demographer at Statistics NZ. He spoke about *Emerging Demographic Trends and Their Implications for Recreation Industry*. Khawaja pointed out that New Zealand is undergoing profound demographic changes with the latest projections pointing to a burgeoning older population, smaller households, growing ethnic and regional diversity, as well as a further greying of population. He argued that because the recreation sector caters for New Zealanders of all ages and shades in various urban and rural locations, it is important to understand the dynamics of emerging changes, to ensure effective planning in a challenging social environment, where the role and value of recreation are also likely to be redefined.

The last keynote of the first day came from Professor David Shilbury, Chair, Sport Management Programme, Deakin University School of Management and Marketing, Melbourne. Shilbury, a key thought leader in the world of sport, spoke about the *Whole of Sport* models currently being implemented in New Zealand and Australia. He outlined the model and explored the recreational dimension with specific focus on the recreation and sport role of local government as a key stakeholder.

The end of day one was highlighted by the Mayoral Welcome from Wellington’s newly-elected Mayor, Celia Wade-Brown. Wade-Brown, whose campaign focussed on environmental matters as well as issues of transport choice, clean technology and local community support joined Conference delegates in the Wellington Council Chambers and welcomed them to the creative Capital.

Day 2

Day two commenced with a keynote address from Professor Sir Ngatata Love, GNZM, QSO, JP on *The Role of Mana Whenua in Providing Commercial Recreation and Tourism in Wellington*. From his position of leadership of the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust, together with the Wellington Tenth Trust, Love addressed the role of Mana Whenua in providing commercial recreation and tourism in Wellington. An enlightening and engaging presentation highlighted the work that had been undertaken in the Wellington region, and the significant and powerful contribution that iwi can and do play in hosting visitors around the region and country.

The following morning sessions on day two ran in four streams as outlined below. All streams, apart from the Communities stream, featured multiple speakers.

Asset Development and Management

Ric Balfour, Park Manager, Western Bay of Plenty District Council spoke about *Building a 21st Century Multiple Use Park From Scratch*. Attendees learned about the scope, vision and development of the Western Bay of Plenty District Council and Tauranga City Council's exciting project, the TECT All Terrain Park - a 1650 hectare sub-regional park created in response to community growth, gaps in recreation supply and opportunities to reshape the model of community involvement.

A panel of speakers addressed *Lowest Price Conforming Tendering: Value for Money or the Perfect Way to Stifle Innovation, Research and Development?* Richard Gibbs, Sports Surface Consultant, Sports Surface Design & Management, Cameron Parr, General Manager, Recreational Services and Warwick Sisson, Senior Manager Sports Parks, Recreational Services spoke from the point of view of clients, consultants and contractors who have been able to operate successfully in the parks arena using models that value trust and honesty in a client/contractor relationship and which don't necessarily judge best value by lowest cost.

Brian Milne, Director, Xyst gave a presentation entitled *Park Categories - the Setting and Measurement of Levels of Service*. He explained the methodology for the development of effective levels of service for the provision and delivery of parks services, the development of standard park categories in New Zealand and demonstration of the use of ParkCheck to provide information for the development of levels of service and performance measurement.

The last decade has seen significant investment in recreation facilities in Wellington City. Jamie Delich, Manager of Recreation and Sport Facility Development and Glenn McGovern, Manager of Sports and Recreation Planning both with Wellington City Council (WCC) presented *Absolutely Positively Recreation: Wellington's Sport & Recreation Projects*. A presentation which highlighted the catalysts for this investment, lessons learned, and the proposed future recreation developments of WCC

Communities

Mary-Jane Rivers, Development Manager, Inspiring Communities and Esther Bukholt, Programmes Transition Manager, Wellington City Council spoke about the diverse people in our communities and what they want for recreation. In *Meet Your Community – Purpose, Processes and People*, delegates heard the voices of the community, workshoped recreation ideas people will flock to, and shared case studies from those working in the field.

Outdoors/Parks/Tourism

Steve Sutton, Senior Technical Support Officer at Department of Conservation (DOC) revealed DOC's Destination Management Framework – a recently developed set of principles and associated actions that supports the strategic vision for conservation, which is: New Zealand is the greatest living space on Earth. In *DOC Takes a New Look at How It Manages Recreation*, Sutton's particular focus was on growing participation of people using public conservation areas.

DOC strategy was given another look in *Connecting the Dots and Colouring Inside the Lines - Exploring Tourism on Conservation Land* Ben Sheeran, Director of Recreation Solution's presentation. He looked at DOC's management of Tiritiri Matangi and Hauturu Little Barrier Islands as the basis of showing the challenge of developing a durable process that balances conservation values with recreation opportunities on public conservation land while also considering issues and options for future recreation and tourism concession opportunities.

Michael Ngatai, Park Ranger Heritage, Manukau City Council and Bobbie Marshall, Contractor, Targeted Pest Solutions Limited looked at the findings of survey carried out earlier this year by Manukau City Council of properties whose owners are given Council grants to maintain areas of native bush on their land in *Conservation on Private Land in Manukau City*.

The devastating gorse fire that struck Whitireia Park near Wellington this past February was used as the starting point for *Making Plans Out of the Ashes*. Philippa Crisp, Planning and Policy for Greater Wellington Regional Council spoke about the sustainable land use plan being developed as a result of the fire, with the aim of matching the underlying land capability with land use and taking into consideration biodiversity, landscape, recreation, pasture production and soil and water protection.

Cycling

The Cycling stream was led by *Cycling – The New Revolution*, a presentation by Louis Rattray, Leisure Services Manager with Waitakere City Council. Delegates learned about the recently completed Waitakere Recreational Cycling Plan which identified a need for greater investment in recreational cycling initiatives and infrastructure in order to address the growing numbers of recreational cyclists, and the positive outcomes this will have for transport, physical and mental health and sport pathway and performance.

Kieran Turner, CEO of BikeNZ talked about BikeNZ's strategies and programmes to address issues such as lack of coordination and leadership in cycling, downward trend in youth cycling and shortage of infrastructure. Despite cycling's present success in NZ, he argued in *Guiding Cycling to Success* that the issues need to be tackled in order to provide for future growth of cycling in the country.

Biking by women was celebrated and promoted in *Connecting the Frocks: Inspiration and Learning from the Frocks on Bikes Women's Cycling Initiative*. Louise Thornley, Senior Research Associate at Quigley and Watts Ltd shared key learning and success factors in the establishment of this innovative initiative.

Jimmy Young, Consultant for Tourism Resource Consultants talked about synergies between recreation and tourism, getting the product right and using tourism as a vehicle for achieving local recreational goals in *Cycle Tourism and Recreation*.

Finally, the future of mountain biking was looked at by Ric Balfour, Park Manager, Western Bay of Plenty District Council in *Managing for the Mercurial Sport of Mountain Biking*. He also addressed changes in the sport and the demographics of riders, and looked at what is being developed in communities for mountain bikers of all ages and abilities.

Tuesday afternoon began with an engaging keynote talk from Hinemarie Larkins, Marketing Research Manager for Tourism New Zealand entitled *Marketing Trends Within Tourism and How These are Relevant to Recreation*. Larkins pointed out that the digital revolution has big implications for the tourism industry globally. She discussed how, based on its recently reviewed marketing strategy, Tourism New Zealand is planning to use digital media, among other tools, to make meaningful connections with potential visitors and capitalise on New Zealand's 'niche' status.

Ian Maxwell delivered the afternoon's second keynote with *Community Development – The Role of Sports and Recreation*. Maxwell, previously the Director of Community Services, Manukau City Council but from November will be Manager of Parks, Sports & Recreation for the new Auckland Council, highlighted the important role of Sports and Recreation as a tool to promote community development.

A selection of case studies was presented Tuesday afternoon, with delegates able to choose two from the group of six compelling presentations. Options were varied with topics addressing career advancement; the effects of upgrading playgrounds on children's physical activity; engagement of community in parks planning, benefits of dance in recreation programmes; community recreation programmes and events as catalysts to bring communities together and reduce barriers to participation; and development by a small rural community of a successful multi-use facility. Participants were given ideas, tools and inspiration to *connect* what they heard with practice in their own communities.

An exciting presentation by Jay Hoots, leader in the world of skills park development and founder of Hoots, Inc, Canada, showed the importance of engaging community in the development of skills parks. In *Bike Skills Parks & Community Involvement*, Hoots also provided an overview of the nuts and bolts of bike park design, construction techniques and risk management plus a look at some case studies. Concurrently, the Chairman of the NZ Community Trust, Peter Dale, tackled the timely issue of *Funding and the Changing Landscape*. Dale gave his views on the future of funding challenges for community organisations and local authorities.

The second day ended with two panel discussions. Peter Dale of NZ Community Trust was this time joined by Jenny Gill of ASB Community Trust, Keith Thorpe of Youthtown, and Robyn Nicholas, Director Community Operations, Local Government & Community at Internal Affairs in *Funding Trends and Issues, Relationships in the Community*. These key players in the field of philanthropic, gaming, lotteries and community grants discussed the effects of the changing environment of funding to the sport and recreation sector. They pointed to the fact that changes to the gaming regulations, a global recession and a history of a reliance on handouts has made many organisations re-think their business models and look for new ways to develop revenue and build sustainability into their operations. The panel provided their views of the current situation and outlined what the funding trends in coming years are likely to be.

The second panel discussion focused on the important contribution that quality open spaces make to community health and wellbeing including: physical health, social and mental wellbeing, the environment and the economy. This topic was given a good look by Helen Topham, Senior Public Health Advisor with Regional Public Health (RPH). In her presentation, *Open Space: Core Infrastructure for Health and Wellbeing*, she explained that due to local planning policies of intensification in centres, combined with population growth, more New Zealanders are living in residential environments with fewer green spaces. She argued that the availability of open space and 'green' areas is an important part of a healthy urban environment which helps to safeguard and enhance the health and wellbeing of our communities as our urban population intensifies. Examples were given and suggestions provided on the pathways and opportunities that we have to work together towards our mutual goals.

Field Trips and Workshops

The last day of the Conference was devoted to getting delegates out and about in order to get to know the Capital City and its region more intimately or to participate in hands-on workshops. Following is a brief summary of these various events.

Open Spaces and Parks

First off the group of 40 headed to Lower Hutt to meet with Thane Walls, Hutt River Ranger and Ross Jackson, Greater Wellington Regional Council, to hear about how the 29km Hutt River Trail was created and how it has become the multiuse track it is today, used by local and regional authorities for recreational events.

Ross Jackson assumed the role of field trip tour guide which made for a fantastic day. From the Hutt River, we headed to Wellington's Waterfront with a stop for a walk around Waitangi Park, the city's newest urban park that has won international and national awards recognising its recreational, ecological and social attributes.

Our next stop was Karori where we met up with a WCC ranger, Jobe, at the Makara Park Mountain Bike Park. Jobe told us about the park and the partnership between Council and the Makara Peak Supporters which has made this such a successful project. The highlight of the trip was next on the list so we kept to time and jumped back on the bus to Zealandia where we broke into groups and went on an hour-long guided walk by Zealandia volunteers. We were completely immersed in another world with kakariki flying around and tuatara to be seen.

Wellington Sport and Recreation Projects

The day started off with a visit to Nairnville Park Artificial Sportsfield in Khandallah, the result of a successful partnership between the Wellington City Council, New Zealand Community Trust (NZCT), Capital Football, and the Wellington Rugby Football Union. Glenn McGovern from Wellington City Council (WCC) explained how the upper field had been transformed from an unplayable bog to a highly utilised sportsfield. The group then briefly stopped at the second artificial sportsfield that WCC has built in the last 18 months, at the former Wellington Showgrounds - a full size artificial sportsfield that is being used by a wide range of sporting groups, including the Wellington Lions and the Wellington Phoenix.

Next stop: Lyall Bay on Wellington's South Coast. Jim Warwick and Vikki Muxlow from WCC gave a tour of the Maranui Surf Lifesaving Club explaining the history of the club and the re-building of the facility following the devastating fire in 2009. The club is now a highly valued and extensively used facility by the community.

Final stop was the Wellington Indoor Community Sports Centre where Jamie Delich from WCC gave the group a tour of this \$47M facility that is due to open just before the 2011 Rugby World Cup - a significant addition to Wellington city's sports and recreation infrastructure.

Pools and Recreation Facilities

The day started in Porirua with a visit to the new Te Rauparaha Arena, a multi-purpose indoor sports and entertainment centre. The group of 13 was impressed and full of questions for the tour guide. Before leaving the area, we managed a fleeting visit to Pataka – Museum of Arts and Culture; though we all wished we had more time to have a longer look through the gallery and museum.

Our second stop was the Pelorus Trust Sportshouse in Hutt City, a purpose-built sports administration and training facility which houses national, regional and local sports organisations. This complex really is state of the art and it was great to see so many sporting organisations working alongside each other. We noted that the meeting rooms and open space are very accommodating and user friendly. While there, we also heard about the 'Sportsville' project - an innovative sports partnership project that focuses on collaboration between clusters of sports clubs with the aim of creating a number of sports hubs in parks across the Hutt Valley - that is currently underway. This proved very interesting for many on the trip as 'Sportsville' is currently top of mind and in future plans for many regions.

Last stop was the Wellington Regional Aquatic Centre where we enjoyed a tour around the recently-added children's waterplay pool 'Spray', the vast plant rooms and the new hydrotherapy area. All in all a great field trip that covered many aspects of recreation!

Community-led Development with Mary-Jane Rivers, Inspiring Communities

Mary-Jane Rivers and Megan Courtney from Inspiring Communities led a full-day workshop on Community-led Development. Participants were introduced to leading edge frameworks and inspired to support and build on our own local grass roots movements including: Strengths-based Approach and Appreciative Enquiry, which encourages us to build from the strengths of communities rather than their 'deficits'; Pro-action Café Model: a discussion formula for unearthing real solutions together with communities; and Change Models that look at how change really happens in communities.

Examples and frameworks which support community development led by communities from the bottom up were introduced. One example was Pt Chevalier (Auckland) Transition Town, where a local Treasure Hunt was organised and brought together 350 people on scooters, skateboards, bikes, prams and on foot for some fun in the Sunday afternoon sun. As the organisers had hoped, while hunting the locals found something else – each other and the community they live in. They explored little known treasures, such as a local family living as sustainably as possible off their small plot of land, barely used local recreation clubs, and unknown corners of local parks. They networked, built stronger ties, and opened up to what Pt Chevalier has to offer. For more details on this and other stories, see the Inspiring Communities website at www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz.

Cycling Community Engagement Workshop with Jay Hoots and Ric Balfour

Jay Hoots, leader in the world of skills park development and founder of Hoots, Inc, Canada and Ric Balfour, Park Manager, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, led participants through the design and construction of skills parks and trails based on engaging with local cyclists throughout the project. Participants learned how to involve the local community in the design, construction and maintenance phases of bike skills parks and trails. Case studies from Canada, the US and New Zealand were used to show innovative ways to customise internationally recognised standards and guidelines to produce outcomes with real community ownership.

Looking Forward

NZRA's recent Stakeholder Survey (Aug/Sept 2010) outlined the need for our organisation to take a firm stance in leading the industry forward. We are listening to what our members have to say and have developed, in conjunction with issues/themes raised during the Conference, the following plan in moving forward.

As an association, we are committed to meeting the needs of people and organisations in all aspects of recreation, leisure, parks, open space management, aquatic, conservation and sport delivery. We take seriously our role in advocating and promoting recreation in New Zealand. As our vision states, '*Recreation is vital to the wellbeing of all New Zealanders*', and in line with that, we intend to lead a strong, vibrant and cohesive recreation sector so that public health is maintained at a high level. We need to be sure we are inclusive in this aim, representing *all* of the population and not adopting an across-the-board approach to recreation. To do this, it is essential that we support community enjoyment of parks, pools, facilities and community environments and remain committed to the benefits of recreation.

A strong theme of *community* has emerged from this year's Conference. Many of the speakers addressed the importance of community engagement in recreation, the value of sport and recreation to communities and the ways in which recreation can be used to promote community development. NZRA will work strongly over the upcoming year to ensure that this focus on community is given the importance it deserves. We will work on *connecting* policy and practice, *connecting* politics and programmes, and *connecting* different sectors together to move forward as a stronger recreation community.

Another key challenge that arose throughout the Conference was anticipating and preparing for changes to the recreation industry due to social, political, environmental, technological, economic and demographic reasons, and embracing those changes. By uniting with other industry professionals as well as other sectors, and sharing experiences, NZRA intends to lead the industry's move into the future with confidence and success. We will advocate strongly for the recreation sector and ensure that recreation is positioned in community plans and national programmes.

Thanks to each and every one of you for your participation in this year's Conference. It's through your commitment and dedication to the recreation industry that these types of events are so successful, and that we are able to build such a strong recreation sector in NZ. We look forward to seeing you next year in Dunedin, November 2011!

Speaker presentations and Award winners will be uploaded to the website in the weeks to come.

Steve Gibling
Chief Executive
New Zealand Recreation Association