



## 2010-what is coming our way

The New Year is upon us and with it, time to think about goals for the year ahead.

For us in the world of local government, this year is significant because in October elections will be held across New Zealand to decide who will be the leaders of our communities. Campaigns will be launched on local issues and topics in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of voters. Tactics will not be without the odd personality attack or conspiracy theory and the media will happily play their part in spreading both fact and fiction.

The one to watch will be Auckland where a presidential style campaign is already underway for someone to become the new mayor of Auckland.

Some of the contenders have declared their intention to stand and no doubt other 'personalities' will join in the race. The stakes are high. Not only will the new mayor of Auckland be responsible for a super city of over a million people - she/he will also be spearheading one of the largest organisational change New Zealand has seen.

Meanwhile south of the Bombay Hills, the rest of us will carry on with our lives as we have done since 1989 when there was a major restructuring of local government. There is something to be said for the status quo at times.

From personal experience I know that when you introduce change to or within organisations, that invariably causes drop in productivity. That's ok, if you are confident that when you start to climb out of it, you know that the new model will take you to a higher level than you were at before the change.

Sometimes we make the mistake of demanding change for no other reason than we are bored and think it's time to change.

It's been 20 years since the current local government structure was established and it's no wonder that there are murmurings for change. Without doubt the



Michael McCartney

Auckland super city has sparked some excitement about council amalgamations - no surprise with that.

In some cases, change could take communities to greater heights, while for others it's questionable. Bigger councils - less cost and more efficient? Maybe - Auckland will be a good test of that.

What about community identity and representation. Will people feel as "connected" with bigger councils or does that really matter?

Closer to home there has been talk for years now about amalgamations models for Manawatu and Palmerston North, Manawatu and Rangitikei, Rangitikei and Wanganui, Wanganui and Ruapehu. So far nothing has come to much.

The reason? Well I think that despite us thinking that change might be good as a community, we are very cautious about actually taking action. I guess for us in our region it goes back to that test of whether any new model would really be better than status quo. I also think that while we tend to get a bit anti-council on specific issues, we intuitively look at the big picture and perhaps deep down our caution about change is because maybe what we have isn't all that bad.

The Government has said that it has no intention to embark upon wholesale changes to the present local government arrangements - rather it has signalled that if communities want change then it's up to them. I think this is a very sensible approach and one that should be applauded.

At the end of the day communities should decide their fate just as they will decide who represents and leads them for the next three years.

## Whanganui Peoples Centre's services

I hope everyone had a good Christmas and a happy new year. I know for a lot of people, the last year in particular, more people have struggled financially especially with the recession and the rise of those who have lost their employment. For our first article I thought this may be an opportune time to update the community of the services that we provide.

The Whanganui Peoples Centre has been operating for the last 10 years and we provide free advice and information to beneficiaries and low-income workers on dealing with Government agencies such as Work and Income and Inland Revenue.

We give advice on the correct procedures to take when communicating with those agencies so that their queries and concerns are resolved as soon as possible. We assist clients to fill out and explain the meaning of the forms handed out by those Government agencies.

We advise clients on what entitlements and assistance they may be able to access.

We support and provide an advocacy service to ensure that our clients understand and receive their rights and entitlements. This may be just a matter of a phone call to the right person or it could entail going with the client to support them or negotiating on their behalf in their absence. We also assist people if they need to have their issues reviewed. Some clients have problems communicating because they could be shy, stressed out or for some other reason so it helps if someone with knowledge can be with them to assist.

A high percentage of our clients come to us through referrals, mainly from word of mouth, friends, people who read our articles in the River City Press, CLAW, CAB, Disability Resource Centre, M.P.'s Offices, Budget Services, Christian Social Services, Te Oranganui, Family Start and also Social Workers. Of course that works both ways as we refer people to the right organisation rather than duplicate services that are



Gary Reid, Whanganui Peoples Centre

equipped to deal with other issues such as legal advice or budgeting.

We also take part in a lot of networking so that we are in touch with other organisations that we can tap into and so that other organisations are aware of our work. It also gives us a chance to talk about issues that may be concerning us, our clients and other organisations. This networking is locally and New Zealand wide.

We believe that it is better for clients to be informed of their entitlements and procedures before they go to Government agencies. Therefore we make ourselves available to make presentations at several organisations, tertiary providers, churches, etc. We produce a lot of written material for them and run through all the different benefits, allowances and entitlements with them.

Anyone who feels they are having problems communicating with Work & Income or Inland Revenue or want to check out their entitlements whether on a benefit or are low-income workers can contact us on 345 8656. We do have clients that drop in to see us and that's fine but because we do spend a percentage of our time at Work & Income and meeting with other community organisations it pays to ring us first if you can.

We are in Community House on Ridgway Street and our hours are from 9am-4pm Monday-Thursday and 9am-2pm Fridays.

- Gary Reid, Whanganui Peoples Centre



## WANGANUI MILLENNIUM WALKERS CLUB

This is our 11th year of existence, and as ever we are very keen to carry on and promote our mission statement of fitness, health and friendship.

This year as in the past will be a very busy one for our members, as we are in the build up to the Relay for Life, to raise money for those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

This event takes place on March 6-7 at the Wanganui City College grounds. If you would like to join us for this occasion, we would be very happy to have you in our team, as we have participated in every one of these events in our fair city.

We are not a money orientated organisation, we donate all our income and more to the health societies, who help others.

We meet every Sunday morning at 27 Selwyn Crescent. 9am is the start time for our walks and you would be most welcome to come and join us. Afterwards we enjoy our morning tea and each others friendship.

If this sounds like the club you would like to become a member of, please ring Darol Pointon on 345 3137 for more information. Our annual subs are only \$25. Your company will be most welcome. Do not delay, ring Darol Pointon today. He can assist you to a better way of life.

- Darol Pointon, Publicity Officer.

## Will NZ become a smoke-free country too?

Finland is set to become the first country to completely phase out smoking.

New laws banning the display of tobacco products and smoking in cars carrying children are the start of what the Finnish State Secretary describes as getting rid of tobacco "once and for all".

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) says that this approach is exactly what is needed in this country.

"We need to set a clear deadline to get rid of smoking and remind ourselves this is an urgent health priority. The Maori affairs Select Committee inquiry into tobacco is our chance to call for that deadline," says ASH director Ben Youdan.

"The tobacco industry needs to be held to account and it looks like Finland intends to do exactly that."

"We need to set our sights on making New Zealand a tobacco free nation by 2020 and it is our hope that the inquiry is the starting point for this," concludes Mr Youdan.

New Zealand's smokefree community has worked on a vision for a tobacco free New Zealand by 2020 since 2007.

Last year the Maori Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Maori.

The committee intends to report its findings and recommendations of the inquiry to Parliament.

Submissions to the committee are due by Friday, January 29, 2010.

## Desperate situation for Baha'is

The Wanganui Baha'i Community said they had received an alarming update of the situation in Iran, regarding the latest persecutions of Baha'is in the country of the birth of the Baha'i Faith. "We are joining with the other Baha'is around the world to pray for an urgent positive resolution of this emergency," Jenifer Wright, spokesperson for the local Baha'i community.

"Continued support is critical, urged Jeni. The New Zealand government has been alerted to these latest allegations and arrests, and have been asked to register the strongest protest to the Iranian government. We are all praying for the safety of the persecuted Baha'is in Iran - and we invite Wanganui people to join us on Sunday, January 24 at 11am at the Baha'i Centre, corner of Gonville Avenue and Tawa Street."

## ASK A PROFESSIONAL

### Veterinarian



#### Q. What can be done about fleas on my kitten?

A. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult cats are not safe for kittens less than four months of age. Fleas do not stay on your kitten all of the time, they will jump off and seek another host (YOU!).

Therefore it is important to kill fleas on your new kitten before they become established in your home. Be sure that any flea product you use is labelled safe for use in kittens. Remember not all insecticides used on dogs are safe for cats and kittens - DO NOT use Asuntol on cats. Frontline flea spray is safe for use on kittens from two days of age. Often if the Queen (mother cat) is treated with Advantage or Frontline Plus Top Spot then the kittens will not need to be treated.

Advantage is safe for kittens from 4-6wks of age and Frontline Plus Top Spot from 12wks of age. There are two new products now available that treat internal worms and fleas as well, both are topical treatments that go on the back of the neck - Revolution that can be used from six weeks of age and Advantage Multi that can be used from nine weeks of age. Check this out at your local Vet clinic.



WANGANUI VETERINARY SERVICES

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### WHANGANUI PEOPLE'S CENTRE



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Fieldworker

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Advice, Advocacy and Support

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