

Tēnā Koutou Katoa

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou

E ngā iwi i huihui nei,

Nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei hui

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou

Thank you for the opportunity to join you here today. I am incredibly excited by the kaupapa of today's hui. I want to start today by congratulating Socialink on the launch here today of "For the Greater Good – Mapping the Social Sector Project." What an amazing piece of work and what an exciting time for this work to come to fruition. In my former life as Principal of Merivale School the social services were incredibly important to the strengthening of my whānau to support them in reaching their potential. But I also acknowledge how hard the environment has been for the social sector over a number of years. In my current role I am constantly discovering services that I never knew existed and I wish I had. I also think that every single group I have met within the past year has told me that their biggest struggle has been dealing with the lack of funding. And I want to acknowledge the amazing people I have met working in those services. Without exception, I have met incredible people who, no matter how difficult conditions have become are committed to working to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Our Government acknowledges the community and voluntary sector (including tangata whenua) plays a key role in our economic, social, cultural, and environmental life. Our Prime Minister has stated that our Government's eventual goal is for everyone to be earning, learning, caring or volunteering, so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute in some way, and to reduce social isolation.

But what does that really mean? In essence, our own formula to meet the challenges we face by unapologetically putting the wellbeing of people and the wellbeing of our environment at the centre of what we do.

Connectedness, inclusion and the principle of kindness in the way we govern is how we choose to meet the challenge of global uncertainty. But we can't realise this goal alone and we know we have to partner with our social sector.

For over 100 years the community and voluntary sector organisations have worked beside government to respond to social need in New Zealand by developing their own organisations and their own, often highly innovative, social services. Our history and small size has meant that the organisations have often been dependent on government funding. This dependency worked because government saw that it had a role to play in supporting the development of civil society.

Since the introduction of the State Sector Act and the Public Finance Act, the relationship between government and the sector has changed. Government has become more directive and business-like with competition replacing co-operative values. A one-sided accountability process has come to rely heavily on financial and metric measures which often bear little relationship to the social development process.

Since 2008, a form of “social investment” policy has been implemented. This relied heavily on delivery of services by non-government organisations. The approach aimed to identify and often blame vulnerable and struggling families and individuals and target delivery of social services almost only to them. This ignored and tended to perpetuate underlying social economic inequalities, barriers and injustices. There has been an approach to contract for these services using market models, which made no distinction between community and voluntary organisations and businesses. Contracted organisations were expected to operate as businesses despite having different values and operating practices, and increasingly they are expected to bear the risks involved in the social development activity driven by government. Many local organisations have been expected to deliver to contractual milestones that often taken them away from being responsive to local needs. And this needs to change. We will work with the community sector to establish long-term funding cycles and transparent processes so that sector organisations have some certainty in their planning and delivery of services.

Recognising that there is always a power imbalance between the sector and government is another step in tackling an improved approach to partnership. To achieve a better dialogue and improved input from the community sector, the Government recognises the need for strengthening the sector and, while government must play a

role in funding this work, the sector itself must be the driver of strengthening processes if they are to be sustainable and build effective capacity.

To achieve a better dialogue and improved input from the community sector, the Government recognises the need for strengthening the sector. The Government values the sector and the conclusions and views it draws from its face-to-face work. Our relationship with them is based on genuine partnership and having rights and responsibilities to each other. We recognise and value their right to speak out and to seek policy and regulatory change where they believe and have evidence that policies are causing harm or could be substantially improved for the benefit of their clients and society overall. Networking and Umbrella Organisations form the glue that binds the wider sector together. They form strong links and connections, help identify common issues and how to tackle them, and they link their member organisations with government departments. They are the key to development of improved relationships between the sector and government. They are also best placed to develop sector capacity. However they are largely under-resourced and struggle to provide the leadership role required of them. The Government recognises the potential for umbrella organisations to strengthen their members and the need for government to provide more adequate resourcing for them. Their independent voice on community issues makes government more accountable to the community, and enhances our society.

Local Government is also an important local connection for community and voluntary sector organisations throughout New Zealand. In some parts of the country this connection has been weakened by the removal of the four well-beings from the Local Government Act. While some Councils have voluntarily retained these roles and goals, many have not.

The Local Government (Community Well-being) Amendment Bill currently before Select Committee seeks to restate the promotion of social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities to the statutory purpose of local government.

Re-inserting the four well-beings back into the Local Government Act will acknowledge the valuable role local leadership has to promote the social, economic, environmental

and cultural well-being of citizens and communities. Submissions are currently open on this Bill and will close on May 25th.

This week marks a big milestone for our Government with our first Budget on Thursday. We have a plan for a stronger and fairer economy; a modern economy that will be fit for purpose for our children and grandchildren. We have a plan to transition to an economy that is more productive, more sustainable, and more inclusive, and which is continuously focused on improving the living standards and wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

This will require a different approach, with different priorities, and different measures of success.

Budget 2018 will take the next critical steps in rolling out that plan. It will lay the foundations required to rebuild the critical social and physical infrastructure in New Zealand. The Minister of Finance the Hon. Grant Robinson has indicated that this Budget will have the rebuilding of the critical public service at its core. But last week we also saw announcements that will boost social services dealing most directly with the harm caused by family violence that will get much needed support as the Government boosts funding to front line agencies for the first time in ten years.

Minister Robinson has also indicated that we also want to measure our success differently. For Budget 2019 we will be using the Living Standards Framework developed by The Treasury to create New Zealand's first Wellbeing Budget. We will look beyond the normal GDP measures to measures which show how what we do improves the health and wellbeing of our people, our environment and our communities. Improving intergenerational wellbeing will drive our priorities and how we measure our success.

Last week we announced work about to begin where we will be consulting with the public on our social wellbeing approach. Our focus will not be on seeing this work as a fiscal liability nor with a narrow focus on analytical data. Rather we will be focusing on social wellbeing with the goal of people realising their potential. And we want to have a strong emphasis on informing our services so they are effective for the people who need those services. It is also important that we earn the trust of the sector so they have faith in the use of how data is used.

We are investing in the future of our people.