

**RODNEY SOCIAL WELLBEING
STRATEGY 2008 - 2011**



2009 ANNUAL REPORT

He pata ua to te rangi ka hiritia ki te whenua.

He paoa o te whenua ka hiritia ki te rangi.

Ko ta te pito ki te whenua, ka hono te tangata ki te whenua.

No reira tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Ko Ngati Whatua tenei e mihi atu ana kia koutou katoa huri noa.

Ko tatou ko te tangata he kaitiaki noahio i nga taonga iti me nga taonga tapu whakarere iho o ratou ma. Te tumanako kia mahi tahi tatou ki te pupuri tonu te mana, te ihi, te wehi me te mauri o enei taonga katoa hei whakaatu ki te ao tona atahua.

A minute particle of rain from the heavens seals unto the earth.

The vapour rises skyward from the earth and seals unto the heavens.

The placenta to the earth gives the affinity of man to mother earth.

Ngati Whatua greets you one and all who reside within the Rodney District.

Man is merely custodian of the minute and holy treasure handed down through generations. Our endeavour is to work together to prosper, to preserve and protect these treasures for the benefit of all race, colour and creed to appreciate and enjoy.



This Mihimihi was gifted to Rodney District Council for use in Vision Rodney (2003). It is replicated here with permission from Ngati Whatua Nga Rima o Kaipara in recognition of the links between Vision Rodney and the strategic intent of this Social Wellbeing Strategy. Nga tamariki ma (pictured) are now active members of their hapu and marae activities. Each in their individual way holds the rangatahi youthful key to the future.

STRATEGY 2008-2011

The Rodney Social Wellbeing Strategy 2008 – 2011 is an action plan for all of the people and communities of Rodney. It documents the response of local government and central government agencies to identified social issues in the context of the Rodney District.

The Strategy has been developed in response to needs identified by a number of people and organisations involved in Rodney District who believe in the aims of the Strategy and are committed to ensuring its implementation over time. It assumes a collaborative approach to achieving the identified outcomes and to the regular monitoring and reporting on the progress of the Strategy to the community and the agencies involved.

The Strategy commits Rodney District Council, in collaboration with the partner agencies in the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group, to prepare an annual report to the member organisations summarising achievements to date and updating them on the future direction of the Strategy.

This is the first of those Annual Reports.

ANNUAL REPORT 2009 - SCOPE

This annual review of the Social Wellbeing Strategy evaluates the Strategy from four perspectives:

- Evaluation of key social indicators.
- Evaluation of the Implementation Workplans milestone achievements.
- Feedback on the benefit and effectiveness of the Strategy from community agencies.
- Feedback on the benefit and effectiveness of the Strategy from members of Social Wellbeing Advisory Group.

The Report examines the overall effectiveness of the Strategy and separately evaluates each of the key priority areas.

The Social Wellbeing Advisory Group was first established in 2005, so while this is the first annual report of the Social Wellbeing Strategy, the collaborative work of the advisory group has been going on for considerably longer than that. There have been some collaborative successes that pre-date the formal launch of the Strategy document and other projects that are included in the Implementation Workplan that commenced before the Strategy was launched. There is also a level at which the journey is the destination, that is to say, the process of developing the Strategy itself has had positive outcomes for the community. For this reason the evaluation will cover the 12 month period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 and outcomes achieved during its development phase.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

Social Wellbeing does not exist in a vacuum, nor do communities exist independent of external influences. What happens globally and nationally impacts on the wellbeing of communities locally.

The past year has seen dramatic ground shifts at the global, national and regional level and all of these impact on communities and individuals within Rodney. Acknowledgement of these events is an important component of this report, as these changes in our environment have impacted the four areas of evaluation.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT:

The collapse of the American housing market and the tightening of global credit conditions in mid 2008 have contributed to a global economic recession that some commentators have compared to the great depression. The recession has impacted housing markets and financial institutions around the world and has had widespread flow on effects for the global economy. Neither New Zealand nor Rodney has been exempt from its impacts.

Many people and business in Rodney have had their asset bases slashed through investment losses and restrictions on credit as large investment companies seek to minimise their risk. This has increased pressure on businesses and individuals and, in combination with increased fuel, amenity and food prices, has increased the cost of basic living substantially. Business closures and rationalisation have resulted in a contraction on the job market and a significant decrease in job security. Unemployment levels have increased four fold since May 2008 to a ten year high and are predicted to continue rising into 2010.

This situation creates additional stress on families and communities and increases the demand and workload on community service providers. There is also significantly less discretionary spending available both for individuals and corporations and this means less donations, sponsorships and philanthropic funding available to support the NGO sector.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT:

The general election in November 2008 saw a National led government come to power after 9 years of Labour coalition governments. The new government brought with it a fundamentally different political ethos and a significantly different set of national priorities.

In response to the recession, the National government has stated its intention to review all government spending and signaled some significant changes to the approach to funding government agencies and services. This led to a period of uncertainty for many government agencies in early 2009 as they awaited clarification from the Government as to what their levels of funding, their organisational structures and their service priorities would be for the coming years.

In addition to these global economic and national political changes, the past year has also seen a comprehensive review of the regional governance of Auckland and a commitment by the Government to merge the eight existing councils in the Auckland region into one unitary Auckland Council. While this has introduced a significant level of uncertainty into local authorities across the region; it has also led to an increased focus on regional collaboration

and the exploration of ways that organisations both within and outside of local government could align their policies and practices more effectively across boundaries.

PLANNING ENVIRONMENT:

During the year, the Rodney District Council reviewed its Community Outcomes, and produced the Long Term Council Community Plan 2009-2019. It also finalised Planning Rodney – a strategic, future focused ‘picture’ of the district based on known growth, economic, social, environmental and cultural factors that indicates the future direction of Rodney District.

These key strategic documents have clearly identified the Council’s priorities over the next 10 years and have re-laid the foundation for the future relationship that the Council will have with communities and with their key strategic partners. These strategic documents all have a strong “place based” emphasis which focuses on outcomes for specific communities of interest.

As institutional and governance boundaries continue to be reviewed, local communities will become an increasingly important focus for the future. They will provide the consistency and the focus for future planning and delivery. A Social Wellbeing Strategy that is linked to the identified needs and the desired outcomes of communities at the local level will potentially increase in benefit and value in the near future.

REVIEW OF STRATEGY OUTCOMES

The Rodney Social Wellbeing Strategy 2008-2011 identifies the following strategic intents:

- To develop a single document that encompasses the social wellbeing approach in Rodney District
- To foster a collaborative approach to social service delivery in Rodney
- To develop a strategy that directs and motivates social service delivery and promotes ownership and leadership
- To identify and gain commitment to key priority areas for service delivery
- To develop a strategy that will give direction to social service delivery by identifying clear, simple and realistic outcomes
- To develop a strategy that will engage the community, promoting local involvement and local solutions
- To develop a living strategy that is able to be easily reviewed, updated and adapted to address changing needs or emerging issues.

2009 ANNUAL REVIEW FINDINGS:

The Strategy has provided a single point of reference for the social wellbeing needs of the district and has been used to support funding allocation decisions by matching services to identified community needs by the Council in the distribution of the Youth Grants fund and the North and West Auckland regional panel of the Community Response Fund.

Consultation on the Strategy has brought together a wide range of agencies, both government and NGOs during its initial development and subsequent community feedback meetings, and several strategic connections have been made as a result. However, to date the Strategy has not met its full potential in terms of collaborative service delivery. This could be more effectively achieved with a specific commitment of resources from the member agencies to the Strategy for the accomplishment of its outcomes.

Most of the projects identified in the Implementation Workplan have been nationally or regionally driven projects that agencies had already committed to delivering. To date very few initiatives have been specifically developed as a result of this Strategy; however the Strategy, through its Implementation Workplan, has provided a means of informing agencies and communities of projects within the district. It is also a means of holding the member agencies accountable to the plans and commitments that they have made and encouraging agencies to incorporate Rodney District in the roll-out of new projects and services.

The Strategy has created opportunity for engagement with the community, both in its development and implementation. In particular the first review of the Implementation Workplan (in November 2008) was a great opportunity to showcase some emerging projects, to build bridges between agencies and to get direct input from the community agencies on their needs and aspirations for the District. The benefits of this workshop and process have been widely acknowledged by community and government agencies.

The combination of the higher level strategy document with the practical Implementation Workplan has created an approach that is able to be easily adapted to respond to emerging needs and aspirations and to reflect changing political priorities while still retaining the core priorities and values of the community.

REVIEW OF CORE PRINCIPLES

The Rodney Social Wellbeing Strategy 2008-2011 identifies the following set of core principles:

- The strategy will have a unique Rodney flavour and respond to Rodney issues
- The process of developing and implementing the strategy will be collaboratively owned and will foster shared and targeted resources
- The focus will be on meeting the current, emerging and potential economic, social and cultural challenges facing Rodney
- The strategy will seek to empower community groups to develop and own the solutions

2009 ANNUAL REVIEW FINDINGS:

The Strategy is uniquely Rodney, and it is essential that it remains so moving forward. This has been deliberately developed as a community stakeholder strategy rather than a Council policy or a central government action plan. As we move towards a new regional governance model, it is important to acknowledge the continuity that communities and community based agencies provide. Having a strategy that has been developed with and is owned by the community is an important component of its ongoing relevance; and efforts need to be made to further embed the strategy into the local communities in 2010.

As part of this annual review process, a workshop was held in June 2009. The purpose of this workshop was to receive feedback from community groups as to their perceived value of the Strategy. This particular workshop was poorly attended and the comments made by those who did attend indicated that further promotion of the strategy in the community and improved community ownership of it was required.

REVIEW OF KEY PRIORITY AREAS

The Social Wellbeing Strategy identified the following 5 key priority areas:

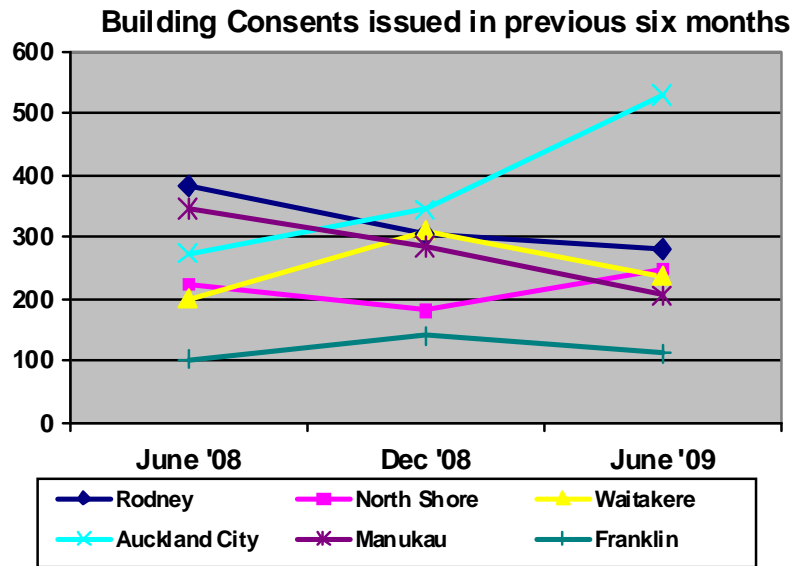
- Affordable and Appropriate housing
- Family Violence Prevention
- Older Adults Participation and Wellbeing
- Sustainable development – “Connected Communities”
- Youth Participation and Wellbeing

Each of these Key Priority areas have been evaluated individually in the following sections.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 1: AFFORDABLE AND APPROPRIATE HOUSING

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In 2008, Rodney District issued the highest number of residential building consents in the region for the first time since building consents data monitoring began. While most Territorial Authorities experienced a substantial reduction in consents compared to the previous year, Rodney issued only three less consents in 2008 than in 2007. The last 18 months has seen a noticeable reduction in the number of residential consents issued in Rodney; but the District remains second in the region for the number of consents issued in the first 6 months of 2009.



A recent Housing Needs Assessment commissioned by the Rodney District Council found that the lower quartile housing prices across the district went through a prolonged period of substantial increase from 2002 to 2007. All the communities evaluated in this report experience at least three years of double digit percentage increases during this period and an overall increase of between 89% (in Orewa/ Whangaparaoa) and 117% (in Helensville area).

In 2008 the lower quartile sales prices dropped slightly across the district; and it is expected that there will be a further drop in 2009. However, these drops have been counter balanced by a tightening of lending criteria and a slowing down of economic growth and household incomes.

Median rents, which have been increasing by approximately 6% per annum during the period 2001-2006, have continued to increase over the past 2 years, although the rate of rise has slowed in Orewa/Whangaparaoa (4.3% per annum) and Kumeu/Riverhead (1.4%).

These figures show that the house price reductions associated with the recent economic recession have had little impact on housing affordability within Rodney. The report indicates that the number of households experiencing housing stress has remained stable over the past 2 years.

Forward modeling predicts that housing affordability will improve slightly over the next two years but that unless there is some significant intervention in this area, the levels of housing affordability are likely to begin dropping again from 2011.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

- ✔ **Four out of seven of the planned future activities identified in the Implementation Workplan have been progressed.**
- ✔ **Two out of ten of the suggested initiatives from the community workshops have also been advanced.**

- ✓ Rodney District Council has commissioned a housing needs assessment for the district which is now complete and the findings of this research will be used to develop an affordable housing strategy in the coming year. Through SWAG contacts the Council has also brokered a relationship with the New Zealand Housing Foundation and is exploring partnership opportunities with them as part of their Affordable Housing Strategy.
- ✓ Affordable Housing continues to be promoted regionally as a key social wellbeing issue by Rodney District Council and the Ministry of Social Development.
- ✓ The Waitemata District Health Board's "Warm and Well" project, which commenced in 2008, was rolled out in Rodney early 2009; ahead of its initial timeline for extending it into this area. This is now being complemented by the Government's own Home Insulation Programme which is a subsidy available to all home owners with houses built pre 2000.
- ✓ Housing New Zealand continue to invest in new stock within Rodney and expand their small portfolio of state housing within the district. 58% of the Housing New Zealand stock in Rodney has been constructed in the last 20 years.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

- ☹ **Community agencies perceive the problems around housing affordability as getting worse.**
- ☹ **Agencies did not see the Strategy has having made any difference in this area to date.**


Rents are not coming down, but incomes are. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find long term affordable housing options for people coming out of emergency housing. There is also an emerging trend towards merging households to share accommodation costs, which could result in an increase in health and social issues relating to overcrowding.

Agencies saw the potential for the Strategy to make a difference with initiatives such as:

- Council making it easier for people to add minor dwellings or do extensions,
- MSD and DIA providing more support for community agencies that provide emergency Housing,
- More community consultation and integrated planning for Housing New Zealand developments, and
- Introducing some standards or a warrant of fitness for landlords.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

Priority activities that the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group has identified to progress the goal of promoting affordable and appropriate housing within Rodney over the next year are:

- Developing an Affordable Housing Strategy for the district;
 - Identifying and networking existing social housing providers.;
 - Exploring opportunities for the New Zealand Housing Foundation to expand services into Rodney;
 - Maximising the economic and social benefits for Rodney from the Governments Home Insulation programme; and
 - Continuing the implementation of the “Warm and Well” project within Rodney.
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KEY PRIORITY AREA 2: FAMILY VIOLENCE

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Figures from Child, Youth and Family Services indicate that the total number of allegations requiring further action has dropped, but the numbers of critical and very urgent cases have increased substantially over the past year. In the past year the numbers of reported incidents of family violence (Pol400s) have remained relatively stable compared to 2007-08 but the numbers of actual apprehensions have increased.

Family Violence continues to be an area of focus for the Police at both a national and local level with a particular emphasis on providing an improved multi agency response to victims of family violence and reduction of repeat incidences of violence. Successful models for responding to family violence suggest the implementation of a coordinated and interagency approach within a framework of locally developed protocols. The principles of 'consistent messages' and 'no gaps in services' should underpin these local responses.

Within Rodney the interagency networks include Police, Women's Refuge, Victim Support and Child, Youth and Families Service (CYFS). The Family Violence Inter-Agency Response (FVIAR) model sets out an agreed case management model. In Rodney FVIAR meets twice each week and also hold to a separate monthly case management meeting to follow up any issues raised at the FVIAR meetings.

There is some early indication that the economic down turn is impacting on the level of reported family violence, and violence generally. It is too early to identify a specific trend at this point, but the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group will continue to monitor this.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?



Three out of fifteen of the suggested initiatives from the community workshops have also been advanced.

- ✓ The Police have established a Problem Solving Team in Rodney. In addition to this they have also created and filled a new position within Rodney Police of Community and Family Violence Sergeant. This appointment has significantly contributed to strengthening partnerships and providing an improved service to victims. A key focus of that role is training of Police staff for compliance with agreed policy and consistency in quality service delivery to victims.
- ✓ Child Youth and Family Services have successfully piloted the SWIFT (Social Work Intensive Family Training) programme through HBC Parent Aid. This programme offers individualised support and training for families who are in danger of losing their children.
- ✓ Differential response has been introduced through Child Youth and Family Services. This approach promotes a more collaborative way of working with families and other organisations to identify and address issues faced by families. A strong positive relationship between CYFS and local NGO's is critical for the effectiveness of this programme.
- ✓ The South Kaipara Men and Family Centre has started running non-mandated anger management courses in Helensville and the Hibiscus Coast.

- ✓ SWAG agencies all support white ribbon day and will explore ways to raise the profile of the Council and Government agencies in this stand against family violence.
- ✓ SWAG also continue to support the Family Centre Reference Group in their endeavours to develop a community facility in Whangaparaoa in the future.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

- 😊 **Community agencies generally perceive the situation as improving in this area.**
- 😊 **The Social Wellbeing Strategy has positively contributed to this by creating opportunities for agencies working in this area to network and critically analyse the work they are doing.**

There are increased resources made available nationally and increased collaboration amongst agencies working locally. There is a greater awareness of and less tolerance of family violence in the community. This is leading to an increased rate of referrals, so any increase in family violence statistics over recent years is generally linked to an increase in reporting (and potential interventions) rather than an underlying increase in incidents.

There are some concerns about the impact of the recession on the prevalence of family violence in the short term and also about the future of funding as government continues to reprioritise social spending.

In the future the community agencies would like to see a focus on early intervention and on helping offenders address their issues as well as supporting the victims.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

Priority activities that the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group has identified to progress the goal of promoting family violence prevention within Rodney over the next year are:

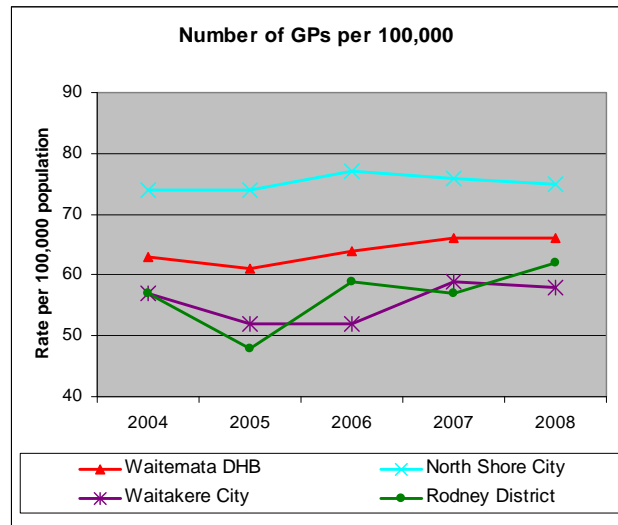
- The successful implementation of the Differential Response model of service delivery including supporting Community agencies to partner in this approach.
- Support for preventative approaches to addressing Family Violence.
- Raising the profile of Council in support of anti-family violence campaigns.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 3: OLDER ADULTS PARTICIPATION AND WELLBEING

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The WDHB Health Needs Assessment showed that the number of people aged over 65 would double in the next 20 years and that much of this increase would be in Rodney. The Council's population forecasts back up this prediction and so this area will be of increasing importance. An overall assessment of health need has been carried out and the DHB has a five-year strategy for care of older people.

There are currently 62 GPs per 100,000 residents in Rodney. A comparison over the past 5 years shows an upward trend in the number of GP's and that, while this rate is still significantly lower than the North Shore, it is comparable with Waitakere.



WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

- ✓ **Three out of ten of the planned future activities identified in the Implementation Workplan have been progressed.**
- ✓ **Five out of fourteen of the suggested initiatives from the community workshops have also been advanced.**

- ✓ The 24/7 primary healthcare plan for Rodney has been finalised by WDHB. This is operating effectively in Wellsford through Coast to Coast PHO and remains a focus for other communities across the district.
- ✓ Ngati Whatua Nga Rima is working with Procure to develop a health portal website that will be based in Heartland Te Awaroa/ Helensville.
- ✓ Rodney District Council is supporting Age Concern Rodney in running an annual Elder Abuse and Neglect prevention workshop. This seminar increases the profile of the issue of elder abuse in the community, clearly identifies it as a form of family violence and helps to resource the community to identify and address abuse.
- ✓ Family and community service are investigating the feasibility of establishing a SAGES (older adults mentoring of families) programme in Rodney.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

- 😊 **Older adults continue to make a huge contribution to the community through their volunteer involvement with community groups and organisations.**
- 😊 **Elderly clients would benefit from Government agencies being more proactive in offering to help to them.**

Many older elderly (80+), who were brought up through hardship in the depression, are used to going without so often endure deprivation and difficulty rather than asking for help. Government agencies are often perceived by the elderly as quite patronising towards them which makes them even more reluctant to seek the assistance they often need.

Many of these groups would struggle to exist without the involvement of the elderly and these volunteers deserve to be acknowledged for their contributions.

Freehold home ownership has traditionally been a key contribution towards the financial viability of the elderly, but as levels of home ownership within the generation that is approaching retirement are significantly lower than previous generations, access to affordable housing for the elderly is going to become a key issue in the future.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

The District Health Board's aims are to provide information and support for older people to remain fit and healthy in the home. The vast majority of older people live independently but, where required, the aim is to provide additional respite and rest home places. The DHB is also developing specialist hospital services for older adults. All these health services need to fit into a network of community support groups to ensure the best possible life chance for older people.

Council recognizes that the housing needs of older adults are different from other age groups and that as the proportion of the population over the age of 65 increases the types of developments needed to facilitate this group will continue to change. This brings with it an emphasis on continuum of care living opportunities and on place based services.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 4: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – “CONNECTED COMMUNITIES”

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Rodney continues to be one of the fastest growing districts in the country and as the population increases there is pressure on both central and local government to provide the physical and social infrastructure required to keep up with the growing needs of these communities. The extension of the motorway up Puhoi and the piloting of a passenger rail service from Auckland to Helensville have improved commuter access into the CBD for residents in North and West Rodney. Improved bus services have also increased public transport options for residents in the Hibiscus Coast.

A lack of physical infrastructure such as water and wastewater services are delaying potential growth in several communities in the North and West of the district, and continuing uncertainty around the funding of the Penlink project is also creating pressure on the future growth potential in Whangaparaoa and Silverdale.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

- Four out of ten of the planned future activities identified in the Implementation Workplan have been progressed.**
- Four out of nineteen of the suggested initiatives from the community workshops have also been advanced.**

- ✓ The District Health Board has established a community engagement alliance and expanded the role of Rodney Healthlink to promote more effective consultation with the community on key health related plans and services.
- ✓ Child, Youth and Family Services has opened an office in Orewa which now provides an increased level of service into the Rodney area.
- ✓ Rodney District Council has appointed a Youth Development Officer to support networking and collaboration between youth service providers across the district.
- ✓ Heartland Te Awaroa - Helensville continues to expand the range of agencies utilising its facilities to provide part time service into the western ward.
- ✓ Family and Community Services are considering a Heartland office in Wellsford. In the mean time agencies continue to explore options for satellite service delivery into communities in the Northern Ward.
- ✓ The Hospital Shuttle Service, contracted to Age Concern Rodney, has expanded its services to include Helensville this year. The usage of this service has more than doubled over the past year and Age Concern has purchased an additional vehicle and hired extra staff to meet this increasing demand.
- ✓ The Government issued a proposed broadband initiative in April 2009. The level of nationwide investment is \$1.5b over 10 years. Rodney District Council will focus on local relationships with private and public sector partners to maximise the proportion of broadband infrastructure investment in the District. This year the Rodney District Council also released its long term spatial plan for the future of the district – Planning Rodney. This document gives a clear indication of where the Council will (and will not) be targeting

future growth in the district and prioritised infrastructure spending within the district based on these.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

- ☺ **Community connectivity is perceived to have improved over the past year as community groups continue to move towards more collaborative approaches to addressing community issues.**
- ☺ **The Social Wellbeing Strategy is credited with contributing to this by creating opportunities for social service agencies to connect with each other both within and across communities and to have some informed discussions about the key issues facing the district.**

Heartland Te Awaroa – Helensville is noted as a flagship for improving community access to services and there is wide support for similar community services hubs to be established elsewhere in the district.

There is still scope for improvement in this area though. Including more effective communication of the strategy to the wider community, creating opportunities for community groups to connect more directly with the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group and carrying out a stock take of services currently provided district wide.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

Priority activities that the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group has identified to progress the goal of promoting sustainable development and community connectivity within Rodney over the next year are:

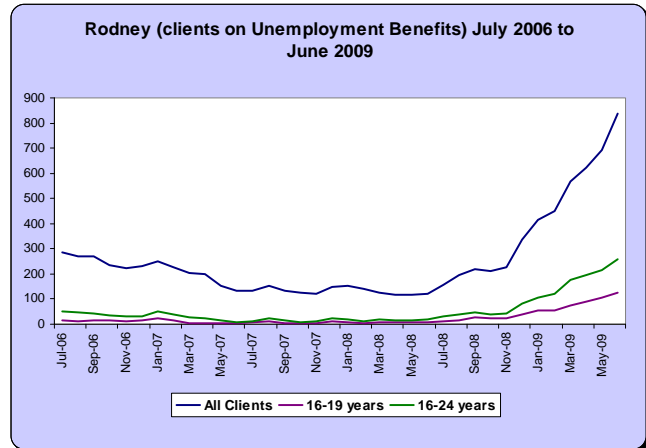
- Encouraging the recognition of community identity and fostering community spirit is critical, particularly in smaller rural environments.
- Identifying and prioritizing opportunities to develop social infrastructure.
- Promoting community development and the emergence of local grass-roots driven solutions to local issues.
- Facilitating investment in broadband infrastructure across the district.
- An emphasis on place based planning which align with the priorities identified in Planning Rodney.

KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELLBEING

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Latest census data show that there has been an increase in the youth population in Rodney and population projections indicate that the proportion of youth aged 15-25 is expected to increase over the coming 10 years in both the Northern and Western Wards.

The total number of youth aged 16-24 on unemployment benefit has increased from 32 in July 2006 to 260 in June 2009. Not only has youth unemployment increased substantially, but it has also increased in proportion to the total number of unemployed, particularly in the 16-19 year old group; (although there has been an easing of the proportional rises in the last three months). In July 2008, youth (aged 16-24) made up 21% of all unemployment benefit recipients and those aged between 16-19 made up 8%. By June 2009, the proportion of youth had increased to 31% and 16-19 year olds made up 15% of the total unemployment register.



As there is a national trend in over-representation of young people in crime statistics; with an increase in the overall number of young people and a substantial increase in youth unemployment, it is reasonable to expect that this may result in an increased representation in the Criminal Justice System. However, this has not been the case in the past year, in fact youth apprehensions in Rodney for the 2008-09 fiscal year actually dropped by approximately 10% on the previous fiscal year.

Specific issues that are often raised with Police in relation to Young people include misuse of alcohol, gang association and drug abuse (particularly in relation to "P"). Police report that around 60% of Police responses relate to events in which alcohol was a factor and while there is a perception in the community that the majority of public disorder incidents involve "youth", alcohol related offences are certainly not limited to young people. While it is apparent that "gang culture" does have some impact on young people in Rodney, particularly through the media, there is limited evidence of the formation or existence of street gangs in Rodney. Likewise, the perception that drug use and in particular methamphetamine or "P" is endemic in the community may be over-emphasized and there is limited statistical data to support any claims that this issue is youth specific.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

- ✓ **Seven out of eighteen of the planned future activities identified in the Implementation Workplan have been progressed.**
- ✓ **Three out of twenty one of the suggested initiatives from the community workshops have also been advanced.**

- ✓ Work and Income provides specific case management support for 16 and 17 year olds on Independent Youth Benefit and active engagement with young people on benefits to support their transition into work.
- ✓ Work and Income also contracts with the Rodney Economic Development Trust to deliver the Youth Transitions to Trades project.
- ✓ Rodney District Council has appointed a Youth Development Officer to promote youth engagement and to support youth service providers within the district.
- ✓ A Youth Forum is now operating on the Hibiscus Coast as well as South Kaipara and the Rodney Youth Workers Network continues to meet regularly.
- ✓ The Council has also completed a review of their Youth Strategy in 2009.
- ✓ Following feedback from youth and submissions to the LTCCP, the Council has agreed to work with local youth and secondary schools to organize a youth festival in 2010.
- ✓ The Police have established two new Youth Constable positions, one at Wellsford and one at Kumeu to deal with youth specific offending. This means the Police now have Youth Services staff located at Orewa, Warkworth and Helensville. Officers undertaking home visits, providing warnings & sourcing alternative actions taken as opposed to prosecutions under the CYPFs Act and are also delivering education programmes to schools.
- ✓ Police continue to support Blue Light activities and initiatives. Strong relationships continue to exist between Truancy Services and Blue Light, as they continue their work targeting ‘at risk’ young people on the Hibiscus Coast and at Wellsford and Warkworth. Ministry of Justice is funding a 12 month programme in partnership with Bluelight and Police to target youth at risk of offending and repeat offending.
- ✓ Police are also working in partnership with YMCA to deliver a new programme to Rodney youth -MART (Minimise [the effects] of Alcohol on Rodney Teens), with funding from ACC.
- ✓ The Emergent Leaders mentoring programme continues to operate in conjunction with Te Puni Kokiri and Ngati Whatua Nga Rima o Kaipara takiwa, working with 15-25 yr olds for future leadership roles.
- ✓ REDT are actively advocating for more tertiary and occupational training courses in Rodney.
- ✓ A Strengthening Families’ coordinator for Wellsford area is based at the Te Hana Community Development Trust.
- ✓ Coast to Coast PHO now runs two 1 hour clinics at Rodney and Otamatea Colleges for student’s to facilitate access to primary care for young people and a Push Play Coordinator provides support to community initiatives targeting increased physical activity and healthy eating.
- ✓ A Sexual Youth Health Programme is also being offered on the Hibiscus Coast in conjunction with ProCare PHO.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:

- ☺ **The community acknowledges the improvements to youth service provision that have occurred across the district and the increased collaboration between providers and with Government agencies**
- ☺ **They also acknowledgement that while the social problems may not be as pronounced, many of the underlying issues still remain and need to be addressed.**
- ☺ **The community would still like to see more central government support for local youth services and initiatives.**

There are a number of new youth service providers emerging across the district and existing providers are developing new, innovative and exciting ways of working with young people. Police are connecting more with youth service providers and providers are also working more collaboratively together.

Stereotypical youth related issue such as youth gangs, boy racers, graffiti and alcohol fuelled disorderly behaviour and violence are not currently major problems in Rodney communities. Community agencies are keen to ensure that this remains the case in the future.

FUTURE DIRECTION:

Priority activities that the Social Wellbeing Advisory Group has identified to progress the goal of promoting youth participation and wellbeing within Rodney over the next year are:

- Employment and training opportunities and outcomes for youth.
- Continue to develop strong and innovative partnerships between Government and NGO service providers to deliver youth outcomes.
- Reducing the impact of alcohol and alcohol related harm on Youth.
- Expand youth health and mental health services available in the area.
- Provide opportunities for young people to actively participate in decision making processes.

CONCLUSION

The first year in the life of the Rodney Social Wellbeing Strategy has not been an easy one. The past year has seen dramatic ground shifts at the global, national and regional level and all of these have impacts on communities and individuals within Rodney.

The global recession has led to business closures and rationalization; unemployment levels have risen to a ten year high and are predicted to continue rising in 2010. This creates additional stress on families and communities and increases the demands and workload on community service providers. This has combined with a significant reduction in donations, sponsorships and philanthropic funding available to support the NGO sector, creating a situation where they have been forced to do more with less.

The change of Government brought with it a period of uncertainty for both Government agencies and the NGO sector, and this uncertainty has been intensified in Rodney by the regional governance restructuring that is underway.

Within this context, the Rodney Social Wellbeing Strategy has sought to bring together, encourage and empower community groups to work more effectively with each other and with local and central government agencies to achieve a set of jointly identified social wellbeing priorities.

The strategy development and the regular Social Wellbeing Advisory Group meetings have definitely aided engagement between central government and Council and have provided an effective means of communicating and sharing information between agencies. The identification of local issues, the input of representatives with local knowledge and contacts has proved useful as has an improved understanding of all the roles and responsibilities of the agencies and individuals involved.

Over the past year 43% of the planned future activities identified in the Implementation Workplan have been progressed and 22 % of the suggested initiatives from the community workshops have also been advanced.

The Strategy has provided a single point of reference for the social wellbeing needs of the District. It has strengthened relationships between central and local government and has provided a good practise example of central, local government and community working together to achieve outcomes for the greater good of the community. Consultation on the strategy has brought together a wide range of both government and non-government agencies, and several strategic connections have been made as a result.

While the direct benefits of the Strategy for the community may be difficult to quantify at this point, continuing the programme to increase community awareness of the strategy will lead to increased involvement and engagement by the community and will result in the strategy being more effective in the future. With more community buy-in the principles of community development will support community driven outcomes.

To date the Strategy has not met its full potential in terms of collaborative service delivery. This could be more effectively achieved by continuing to pursue greater community ownership of the Strategy and would also be aided by a specific commitment of resources from the member agencies to the Strategy for the accomplishment of its outcomes.

Facilitated by Rodney District Council



