

Community Sector Taskforce



Panui 004

5 April 2005

*He pounamu kakano rua
"A double grained piece of greenstone"*

Tena koutou katoa and warm Pacific greetings.

CABINET DECISION WITHDRAWS GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR NEW NATIONAL ENTITY FOR COMMUNITY SECTOR

With absolute astonishment, the Community Sector Taskforce yesterday received the news from Minister Rick Barker that Cabinet no longer supports the establishment of a national entity to work across the Community and Voluntary Sector on common concerns and issues.

The Minister reported that the reasons for Cabinet's 11th hour decision are:

- They do not believe it is possible for an entity to gather together the diversity of the whole sector
- They do not believe that an entity will add value to the Sector

The Taskforce received this news after a day of meetings to plan for the inaugural AGM of the new body, set down for May 27 and 28. Until the Minister arrived with the news, no-one in the Taskforce had an inkling that the very fundamentals of a new entity were in question by Government.

In May 2004, Cabinet agreed "to establish sustainable funding for a nationally mandated community and voluntary sector entity outside of Government. The entity will coordinate and be a focal point for community, voluntary and Tangata Whenua organisations on sector wide issues and oversee capacity building projects, and will work within a Tiriti/Treaty framework."

This decision followed years of discussion within the community and voluntary sector, and between Government and the Sector. Sir Paul Reeves, Dorothy Wilson and Gill Genet had chaired three "waves" of development on these agendas since 1999. Regional, Sector and Tangata Whenua hui over the past two years had developed the concepts for the entity and for the priority projects for collaborative work.

From the Taskforce perspective

- Cabinet's decision flies in the face of the Statement of Government Intent (SOGI) signed by the Prime Minister and Minister Maharey as a commitment to building "respectful relationships between government and community, voluntary and Iwi/Maori organisations".
- The contribution of the Sector to Aotearoa/New Zealand is estimated at \$1.3 billion per year. A \$3.4 million investment to a national entity and sector driven capacity building projects (announced last year) seems a small and wise investment by the State. Is the decision this week the beginning of a turnaround by Government?

It was Cabinet's instruction that required the Taskforce to redirect its energy away from practical projects and on to forming a legal entity where future project resourcing could be channelled.

The reasons reported by the Minister for Cabinet's decisions demonstrate a complete lack of trust that the Sector can work together

- The legal entity was being formed in this timeframe BECAUSE CABINET had decided it was an essential prerequisite to future work by the Sector in collaboration with government, including capacity building strategies.
- The reasons reported by the Minister for Cabinet's decisions demonstrated a poor understanding of the purposes and intentions for the new entity.
- The entity and its work embodied years of work by the Sector (much of it unpaid)
- The aspirations of the new legal entity as set out in the Trust Deed are aligned with the stated intentions of the Government for a relationship with the Sector.

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The Taskforce is amazed that Cabinet on the one hand has invested millions in setting up the Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector to look after Government's engagement with the Sector but on the other hand opposes a national entity OF the Sector to relate on equal terms with the Government.

The Taskforce feels very strongly that it will need to take guidance from the Sector on the way forward, and on how the Taskforce should respond.

The Minister assured the Taskforce that Cabinet still wants many of the same outcomes but that Cabinet support for the establishment of a new entity is 'dead in the water'. An emergency meeting of the Taskforce will be held next Wednesday 13th April.

As things stand:

Trustee Nominations	On hold
Inaugural AGM 27-28 May	On hold
Planning regional meetings and hui	On hold

We know that many of you will have strong thoughts – and we acknowledge the thousands of people in the Sector who over the years have contributed to concepts for collaborative projects and new ways of working together.

Some sector leader comments today:

“Incensed”;

“Outraged”;

“Betrayed”;

“Disbelief”;

“Why are we surprised, this is just more of the same, Government changing the rules and pulling contracts with no sound reasons...so what's new?”

You may wish to send your thoughts directly to these or other Ministers of Cabinet, with a copy to us at

communitysectortaskforce@xtra.co.nz

The Prime Minister

(Signed the SOGI)

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Minister Steve Maharey

(Signed the SOGI)...

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Minister Rick Barker

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