

WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT - 20 Years a Safe Community Overview

Evolving Priorities

In the 20 years since its original accreditation, the Waimakariri District has experienced significant change, in terms of both size and demographic make-up. This has translated into an evolution of what constitutes a 'Safe Community' and the associated priorities.

In 1999, when first accredited, Safe Waimakariri had two key priorities: Child Safety and Crime Prevention; including Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and Family Violence.

As work in these areas grew, there was a clearly identified need for increased collaboration across the various sectors represented in the District. If safety, health and social outcomes were to improve, we needed to get those working in those sectors talking to each other; collectively identifying gaps and opportunities to reduce duplication and facilitate easier access to community supports.

This resulted in the establishment of four broad network groups:

- North Canterbury Family Violence Network in 2000
- Waimakariri Health Advisory Group in 2004
- Social Services Waimakariri in 2007
- North Canterbury Youth Services Network in 2009

With facilitation from Community Team staff, these networks were crucial in identifying emerging issues and providing some context, alongside the local data, around which appropriate working groups could be established – some for a time, and some still enduring.

Key issues by 2009 were:

- Child Safety (Poisons, falls, drowning, fire safety)
- Family Violence
- Rural safety
- DIY Falls Alcohol-related harm
- Older Persons Safety
- Accessibility

As a response to emerging social issues for local young people, in 2010 a Youth Development facilitator was employed. The brief for this role included the development of a youth strategy and subsequent establishment of the Waimakariri Youth Council in 2012.

The impact of the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010/2011 saw a large influx of earthquake 'refugees' from Christchurch and migrant workers. This coincided with a significant upheaval for the residents of our eastern communities, many of whom had lost homes and businesses. Additionally the District's three main centres experienced the temporary or permanent loss of the majority of 'main street' businesses, libraries, aquatics centres and even supermarkets.

Consequently, the need to focus on wellbeing and resilience, and to facilitate inclusive and empowered communities became key. This necessitated a corresponding rationalisation of some of the Injury Prevention Work, which had undergone a hiatus for several months, while Council diverted its attention to earthquake response and recovery.

Important new priorities arose:

- Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention
- Increased, broad-spectrum Family Violence Prevention programmes
- Connectedness, focussed on the integration of new residents into the life of the District
- Empowering people with skills and knowledge to help them better integrate

With the acquisition of targeted funding, a Suicide Prevention Steering Group was established in 2013. This work continues to be a key priority.

A Social Inclusion Initiatives Group was established in late 2011. This was in response to local research indicating that this was a significant issue for our District; not only for the elderly, bullied youth and disaffected, but also for new residents, forced North from Christchurch and feeling like they didn't fit or weren't particularly welcome. That project has resulted in long-standing programmes that facilitate an intentional welcome for newcomers and a range of low-key social connection groups across the District.

In 2016, a Migrants and Newcomers group was established. Its mandate is to engage, connect, inform and empower migrants, through education, events and social connection. A range of successful initiatives have been developed in this area over the past three years and this is now very much a migrant-led group.

In late 2018, Ministry of Social Development, 'Office for Seniors' funding was acquired for the development of an Age-friendly Plan for the District. This was adopted by Council in November of this year. An Age-friendly Advisory Group is being established to oversee its implementation.

As we head into the third decade of the 2000s, new priorities are emerging. Societal focus has increased in two key areas of concern:

- The impact of climate change
- The importance of sustainability

Council has recognised the role that it plays as a leader in cultural change in these two areas. In Waimakariri District Council's recently released Corporate Sustainability Strategy and Action plan, Chief Executive, Jim Palmer refers to a clear link between these issues and the wellbeing of our residents, reflecting the strategy's introductory statement:

*"Ma tātou te taiao ko te atawhai.
mō tātou te taiao ko te oranga*

It is for us to care for and look after the environment, to ensure its wellbeing. In doing so we ensure our own wellbeing and that of its future residents."

(Shared Drive Folders 5, 6 and 8: subfolder a)

Governance

From 1999 until 2014, governance of Safe Communities was undertaken by Injury Prevention Waimakariri, overseen by Council's Community and Recreation Committee and supported by the North Canterbury Road Safety Committee and A Safer Community Council.

A range of priority-based steering groups sat under each of these three groups. This represented a somewhat top-heavy and slightly untidy, three tiered governance model.

In 2013, with resourcing tight and Central Government questioning the role of the Four Wellbeings in the Definition of Local Government, Councillors called for a review of the governance structure surrounding the work of the Community Team. As a result of that review, in 2014 the Safer Community Council and Injury Prevention Waimakariri were disestablished and replaced with a single Safe Community Steering Group. However a three tiered governance model was maintained:

Council Committee  Safe Community Steering Group  Priority-Based Steering Groups

By 2016 the extent of pressure on local services, due to an increase in social issues associated with earthquake recovery, became apparent. People were 'meeting out.' Staff realised that, to maintain quality community-led development and safety and wellbeing programmes, there would need to be a further rationalisation.

By that time, well-structured, longstanding, priority-based steering groups were working cohesively to produce quality, evidence-based initiatives.

Attendance at Safe Community Steering (Governance) Group meetings was flagging as members, more often than not, had responsibilities on priority-based working groups also. There was not sufficient worker capacity to backfill. It was decided that this effectively represented an unnecessary duplication and that, as Community Safety and Wellbeing was overseen by a Committee of Council, the extra layer of governance was no-longer necessary. The result is the two-tier governance structure, illustrated on the Governance and Milestone Timeline (*Shared Drive Folders 4: a) and 5)*

Partnerships and Process

The Waimakariri District Council Community Team maintains associations with over 300 local and national Community, NGO and Central Government partners, alongside enduring partnerships with local iwi, business and schools. Two of the District's larger schools are formally accredited as International Safe Schools. (*Shared Drive Folder 4)*

A community-led approach is applied to the planning and delivery of initiatives that address key priorities for the most affected demographic groups. These are developed in line with the 'Spectrum of Prevention' which outlines seven inter-related strategies that, combined, ensure that a broad spectrum approach is applied to creating a safety culture and in-turn reducing harm.

Waimakariri District community safety and wellbeing programmes are designed to be sustainable, long-term initiatives.

An evidence base is applied to the identification of priorities, combining local and national data from a range of sources with qualitative evidence from key local and regional stakeholders.

Project evaluation is aligned with the Results Based Accountability model, with a range of evaluation methods applied to project evaluation, to determine the impact of specific initiatives. Regular process evaluation ensures that programmes are adapted and updated to meet the needs of our growing communities.

(Shared Drive Folders 4, 7 and 9)

Resourcing

For some 10 years, resourcing for community safety was fully bulk funded by the central government Ministries of Health and Justice. However by the mid-2000s, Ministry of Justice was providing project-only funding and philanthropic funding sources were acquired for that facilitation.

By the late 2000s, Ministry of Health were signalling that they may also remove funding for the facilitation of community safety initiatives. Staff began to explore the possibility of acquiring Council 'rates' funding for Community Safety. Initial attempts at this were unsuccessful; however petition was made for the Ministry to grant an additional 5 years funding, in response to our District's special need, related to earthquake recovery. This was granted.

In 2017, with final cessation of Central Government funding evident and the incoming Labour government signalling the likely return of the Well-beings into the Definition of Local Government, Council agreed to fund community safety facilitation. This was written into the 2018 – 2028 Waimakariri District Council Long Term Plan, ensuring sustainability of coordinator funding.

(Shared Drive Folders 4: a) and 6: a))

Project funding continues to be acquired externally, via Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Philanthropic Funding Organisations.



Tessa Sturley
COMMUNITY TEAM MANAGER

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