

Minutes of the Pacific Forum Held on 12 November 2008 At Te Papa

Mayor Kerry Prendergast welcomed everyone and thanked people for attending. She acknowledged the attendance of the Councillors, Chief Executive Officer, Management Board Team, City Council Officers and guest speakers and thanked the group that performed the opening prayer. She noted that consultation with the public is essential to what Council does and noted that currently Council are looking at transport being allowed to travel through Manners Mall. Mayor Prendergast encouraged public participation regarding this proposal and said that people should say whether or not they agree with this proposal. She noted that the recent Tu Tangata event had just celebrated 30 years and said that she was proud that the City Council are the major sponsor for this event. She also talked about the Pacific Festival that will be held on 31 January 2009 and noted that this will be an annual event. She also said that she was pleased to announce that Nui FM are the naming sponsor for the Festival. She then introduced the programme for the night and acknowledged the work of the PAG and Council staff.

Garry Poole acknowledged the Mayor, Councillors and Harry Tauafiafi and welcomed everyone to the Forum. He then talked about the feedback from the last forum and said if there were any questions about this then these could be raised during the question and answer session. He did note two things, on Page 2 regarding Creative New Zealand, they will support people. Also on Page 5 the Council's Grants Team run programmes to show people how to make applications to Council and they would be happy to help.

Ida Faiumu-Isa'ako, Chair of the Pacific Advisory Group, then presented her report on behalf of the PAG. She said that this is the second time that she has appeared in the role as the PAG Chair. She gave acknowledgement to Council and Parliament and noted that the new PAG committee are now one year old and have done their first year in office. She said that they have been through their Council induction now and she introduced the PAG members. She paid tribute to the late Reverend Lagi Sipeli and acknowledged PAG members that have moved on. She noted that there is now a full representation of all the island nations on the PAG and since May 2008 they have been monthly. Milestones achieved by the PAG this year include the inaugural Pasifika Festival with good community participation; completed the Council induction process; made a submission on the Wellington City Council Draft Annual Plan; working on the housing upgrade with Council; working on the Forward Programme in consultation with the public; went on an eastern tour of the city. She also noted that Brenda Cottingham nominated a Niuean group for the Wellington Airport Community Awards.

PRESENTATION – Michel Tuffrey, MNZM – Samoan Artist

Michel said that what has made him successful is here in Wellington. His success has come from mentors especially youth through seeing what the youth want. He said that people are spoiled for choice in Wellington with Te Papa, etc being available to them. He has received a lot of support through his family and lives by the motto 'if you want it then put in the hard work'. He has encouraged youth to come over this side of the world to present their art in collaboration with other artists. Having no hidden agenda has made the transition overseas easier for him. He has been looking for other successful Pacific Island artists overseas and has not been able to find many. He said people must ask questions – you must have a passion for what you are doing – you must give as well as take. We need action instead of just talking – we need to take the lead – learn from our failures – be proud of what you are doing in Wellington – give youth a hand and give them more encouragement. The future for the arts may be to go overseas and take our art to the world. We need to look at different outlets for youth – guide youth – this is a good time to collaborate and share our ideas.

PRESENTATION – H.E. Sililia Grace Tupou Talagi – Niuean Diplomat

Grace explained that she has been the Niuean High Commissioner for just over three years. She said that two notable achievements for Niue have been the hosting of the Pacific Leaders Forum and being nominated as Miss Pacific. They have a recognised seasonal employers scheme that employs people in New Zealand on farms. She noted that the Pacific Islanders are well represented in New Zealand sports teams being only 6.9% of the New Zealand population that means that Pacific Island people are a very productive group. Pacific Island people are very hardworking people and we can celebrate that unemployment for Pacific Island people has reduced with many Pacific Island people having successful businesses, eg, designers. Pacific Island people are made up of diverse ethnic groups. She congratulated Tu Tangata and said that it is good to see the start of a Pacific festival in Wellington. She noted that food is a big part of Pacific celebrations and we must remember that we are what we eat. Pacific people must remember to celebrate their ties with their home lands and that Pacific people should continue to value what we are and what we are doing.

PRESENTATION – Dr Api Talemaitoga – Chief Advisor, Pacific Health

Dr Talemaitoga said that he has come from humble beginnings and from an early beginning he knew that it was important that he got a good education so that he would be able to have a good job and a better standard of living. Improvements will come through better living and better education. Through this there will be better jobs, better housing and better health for our families. Getting into this position is an extension from a good education and we should encourage children to get a good education. He said that his role is not about being a doctor but is about helping people in the community. His success has not come about by being an individual but has come through the support of his family. He believes that it is important to give back to the community and to give back something of yourself. He said that success is when he sees Pacific health numbers reduced and improved.

OPEN FORUM QUESTIONS

What inspired you to be a doctor? *Dr Talemaitoga said this was an interesting story and that he had not always wanted to be a doctor. He thought that he could become a school teacher so that he could break the mould. He failed physics so he did not get into pilot school so instead he became a doctor.*

What was your favourite subject? *Dr Talemaitoga said that his biggest joy has been being able to share his knowledge.*

How long did you serve your apprenticeship? *Dr Talemaitoga said that he went back to Fiji for six years after becoming a doctor and has now been a doctor for 25 years.*

It was noted that WEMO mentioned in the Chair's report is supposed to have a low profile and not to let everyone know about this place.

What is the best medicine for our children that have already left school and are on the streets in gangs taking drugs – what is the best advice to give them? *Dr Talemaitoga said that this should work in the same principle as the community way. We need to teach respect to young people, they still need love and support and programmes that might get them interested. Being a doctor is only one career and they can play a part in a community as a qualified builder, musician, etc as this will give a sense of fulfilment to our people.*

You talked about the need for our young people and talented artists to be looking outside of Wellington and New Zealand. Do you think there is an opportunity for growth in designs and brands in New Zealand? *Michel Tuffrey said that there are not only opportunities in New Zealand but we should look at opportunities in museums in other countries. New Zealand is starting to acknowledge digital imagery and a great source of this would be to look at the past, health and what we are eating. There is a source of resources here in the South Pacific.*

We are still in the beginnings of looking into showcasing art overseas and we need to build up these relationships.

Your work is expensive and if someone wanted to purchase a piece of your art do you have a layby system? *Michel Tuffrey said that he has set business systems in place and has standard business practices.*

What inspired you to be an artist? *Michel Tuffrey said that this happened basically by default because he could not write or read properly and he also had a lot of help from mentors.*

Do you have a favourite type of art and what do you like to draw *Michel Tuffrey said that he is inspired by looking and admiring the past from photographs, etc.*

In regard to success you may miss something in striving to achieve for better jobs. Do you look at success as being family or something about yourself? What is your definition of success? *Grace Talagi said that success to her is when other people recognise her. She said that she does not feel that she is successful in many things. When you get a response or reaction from that makes you look successful. In many situations this is when a number of people single you out.*

Dr Talemaitoga said that success to him is when he can measure this by helping other people in the community to better themselves or the community gets more knowledge or education and to see the understanding from people. He said that he misses the weather, food and company from family members but he has chosen to be here.

Michel Tuffrey said that he feels success is when he sees other colleagues excel in what they are doing. You have to make compromises and enjoy your uniqueness. It makes him proud to see other colleagues achieve.

I was very impressed with the last census to see that a high proportion of Pacific people are very religious and uphold religious values. How much dimension do you think Pacific people are bringing Christianity into the professions? *Dr Talemaitoga said that Christianity has an influence on his life but the best respect for religion is knowing that it is there and respecting other people's religious beliefs.*

Grace Talagi said that religion is very important to her especially on occasions where you need call upon your reverence to perform for you and she said that she has respect for all religions.

Michel Tuffrey said that he used to go to church as a child and he does like the structure but other people have different beliefs and you should be open minded.

With regard to the City Housing stock, how safe is it and how regularly do you maintain the playgrounds especially in the Newtown Park area? *Greg Orchard said that Council have a standard for playgrounds and if there are any issues please let the Council know.*

As a responsible landlord how responsible are you in encouraging Pacific Island tenants to move into a house and own their own home? *Greg Orchard said that Council do not actively work to encourage tenants into their own homes but Housing New Zealand does have a programme to get loans through Kiwibank.*

With regard to the parking of vehicles at Council owned flats, you can only have one carpark outside your dwelling and if you have more than one vehicle you have to park it on the street. I would like a clear explanation why Council are limiting people's ability for economic growth as we have the right to have as many vehicles as we want. The City Council does not have the area for tenant's to store all their property in. *Mayor Prendergast said that most of Council's housing stock is in the central city where there is some parking supplied but if a Council tenant has more than one car then they have to use the streets like other people in Wellington.*

The theme about tonight is wonderful and it was good to hear from speakers. I wonder whether any Councillors in the Wellington Region have ever thought about encouraging further growth in the field of education by providing financial sponsorship for higher achieving students as I have not seen this encouragement for growth. *Mayor Prendergast said that Council do not have a scholarship or sponsorship scheme as Council would be asked to give these to other ethnicities as well. This is something that the Government addresses and there are some spaces held in universities for Pacific Island and Maori families but this is not something that local authorities get involved in.*

I would like an update on the transition and how many families have been relocated and the construction in the Council flats in the Newtown area. *Greg Orchard said that the Council received money from the Crown just over two months ago and have signed the agreement for the housing upgrade. With regard to the work to date, we have been working on the design and have held vacant homes open with very few tenants having been moved. Council have held design meetings with the tenants. The first 12 months of the programme will be looking at undertaking more meetings with tenants to keep them informed. Construction work will be starting in July next year and we will be looking at the housing needs before starting.*

What are the implications for the local authority policy in Wellington with regard to the incoming National Government? What are some of the things to look forward to in Wellington? *Mayor Prendergast said that in terms of Wellington City one negative is that there are no constituency Government MPs in Wellington and the two MPs for Wellington are only list MPs. There are some big picture issues for Wellington like the leaky homes and the need to secure extra funding for infrastructure investment. Council will continue to provide support in Wellington in terms of the arts. We have put in a bid for funding for more cabling for the broadband initiative and the National Government have promised more money for these types of projects so hopefully Wellington City Council will still meet the criteria for funding.*

With regard to the Council's housing project, how will this affect rates in the future? *Mayor Prendergast said that part of the contract that Council signed with the Government was that Council would ring fence income from housing to reinvest in housing so there would be no impact on rates.*

I read a recent article stating that there will be three new supermarkets opening up in the City. What is the Council's policy on supermarkets and what is the impact that these will have on the environment? *Mayor Prendergast said that you should not believe everything in the DomPost. There have been early discussions but Council have not heard anything further from these companies for over a year and they have not put in any applications. There is a new supermarket planned in Newtown that has applied for demolition consent and this will be more likely to go ahead. The Mt Cook supermarket are nearly ready to come to Council for consent. As part of the consent process Council looks at the impact on traffic, noise and air, the size and bulk of the premises and the economic impact. It needs to be noted that the City has grown and Council needs to think strategically and make allowances for peoples' needs and the City's growth.*

Are there any opportunities to provide openings in Council for people to come into Council from university for mentoring? I have heard that there is a Council in New Zealand that has a relationship with the Pacific Island Nations. Is there any part of the LTCCP for Council to make connections and share references? *Garry Poole said that Council will welcome applications from everyone because having a workforce that reflects the community is one of the factors considered when hiring people. It must be kept in mind that the law requires Council to hire the most suitable people and we have to appoint the best people for the job because of the expectation of our ratepayers. He noted that Manakau Council have invested outside of their city and a number of years ago Wellington City Council talked about this but felt that it was not justified. We are conscious of the need to support the Pacific Island nations and are open to offering expertise and sending someone to the Pacific Island Nations like Kapiti Council does.*

Garry Poole then closed the forum and said that hopefully this forum had answered some of the questions that people might have. He noted that there is a lot of interest in the housing project and the team will ensure that tenants are informed about what is happening so that everyone knows what is happening going forward. He said that he hoped that we have been able to answer questions about Council to everyone's satisfaction and he thanked the speakers for their contribution.