



14 & 15<sup>th</sup> October 2026 Energy Events Centre, Rotorua **MC Mark Sainsbury**

**RESET- Creating a Stronger Local Government**

**REFOCUS - What LG Needs Next**

**REIMAGINE - The Forces Shaping LG**

**Day 1.** 14/10/26

**8am Women's Breakfast**

Sponsors: Datacom

Host: Tracey Cotter Martin

Journalist Andrea Vance was interviewed by Tracey.

Take home points: 1992 Women 29% of LG – 2022 Women 45.5% LG

Andrea has three pillars: The Public's right to know; Holding people to account and giving those left behind a voice.

NZ is so small and intimate that you bump into those you have been tough on, so you need to know your work holds water. We need to be more courageous. It's not personal.

Approval is a conflict of interest in some sense.

Trust and Respect are both very important from people you interview. You have to check your bias the whole time.

Who is accountable and how is it going to be fixed? When politicians dodge questions, they are dodging their constituents.

Failure, in itself, doesn't ruin your credibility. Just be honest. It's the performative dance you do afterwards that ruins your credibility.

Gill Duncan

Taihapa Community Board

Leadership is only formed and displayed when you are under pressure.

Central Government has the power to do something about Social Media. Fair Scrutiny.

Q: How do we navigate change we haven't asked for? A: LG is underrated. Real politics happens at Community level – people care whether bins have been taken out. Regional Mayors could end up being more powerful. Stop cowering before Central Government.

People have lost trust. There has been "a crisis of Institutions". Journos too, need to rebuild Trust.

We need to remember that most people are lovely.

Women need to be accountable. There is bigotry in soft treatment, it can lead to a lack of respect.

Velocity is driving everything. Tracey: "Velocity is the enemy of intent"

**We need to ignore Social Media and teach our children critical thinking.**

**9am Welcome:** Korty Wilson lead the attendees into the Venue/onto the "Marae"

**9.30am LG President** and Gisborne Mayor Rehette Stolz - we have created better relationships; we are better together.

**Wins:** the Ratepayers assistance scheme; the international visitors levy coming to LG.

Headstart: really disappointing it's now on ice. Councils did a lot of work that is not lost. Going forward local design will be told to all Parties. Structural reform is not an outcome in itself; we need to be part of making local voice heard.

" The Commitment and Strength we find to support our communities, must never change".

**9.40am Te Maruata Address:** Aubrey Ria and Dinnie Moeahu

Working together doesn't always mean that we agree – Aubrey

Relationships are infrastructure – Dinnie

Efficiency does not mean democracy. Trust is earned through listening, transparency, and doing what we say we will do. What kind of future are we willing to take responsibility for?

13/10/26 Te Maruata and Creative NZ formed a partnership.

**9.50 LG CE** The lay of the Land – Scott Necklen.

2.5% Visitor levy supported.

47% surveyed want Councils and Communities to make LG decisions and only 16% said Central Government.

51% support for cap on rates but declines when People consider impacts.

Trends. Together, these trends mean you inhabit a world where. People have more freedom but less certainty, more connection but less shared truth. More self-exhibition, but more pigment to curate More stimulation, but widespread boredom.

These trends mean you operate in a world where. People curate their identity to. To the context and the issue. They are sceptical of meta narrative claims. Cynical about institutions? And young people are anxious and pessimistic about the ability to make change. People are using AI to help them navigate all of this.

Trade off: Optimism versus stability.

**Sir Brian Roche** – Transforming the public service.

There is pressure from C-Government to reduce LG headcount and fiscal spend.

87% of civil servants believe they contribute to better outcomes for their Communities.

The public sector has grown 61% since 2020. The system is too fragmented, siloed, and complex. There is a lack of whole-of-system view.

The goal is better outcomes for the people who use them; the goal is not new infrastructure.

Duplication comes at a cost; complexities drive costs. Need SHARED. Shared services can deliver service or policy more cost effectively

Digital tech is no longer optional. Technology must be in the service of people.

Trust is our most valuable asset: People need to feel valued and respected.

NZ is small – this is our greatest strength. Productivity is vital.

Our differences are at the margins, but we tend to develop our systems as if we are unique.

MCERT was designed as a one stop shop.

Outcomes are really important. Focus on the things you have influence over.

## Day 2 15/10/26

### **Iwi Relationships** – Tame Malcolm, Te Arawa Lakes Trust

Maori/Crown Interface. "The best thing is to be a good person".

Build: Meaningful relationships. This means that you know what both sides want;

Healthy relationships. This means you can say "NO" from a principled place where the effort to say "Yes" has been put in; a "No" coming from this is OK as the effort put in maintains the trust.

### **Simpson Grierson.** Mike Wakefield and Padraig McNamara.

Slides will be made available.

Head Start was meant to align with the new resource management systems. Auckland has a population of 1.6 million people. The Auckland example in 2007 - Royal Commission expertise, was two years to reach conclusions. The total restructure was five years.

1st of November 2010 was the start date. Local government restructure can't be rushed. A negative: Key staff will be taken away.

The local boards model has not been taken up. This is different to central boards and relies on the principle of subsidiarity: Regional aspirations built on local knowledge.

## Principal of Subsidiarity

### **Rebecca Wright discussion:** Fran Wild, Nick Smith, Scott Gilmore, Kevin, Malcolm.

- We cannot ignore our role in societal hardship.
- We have to take our part in affordability
- 67 times duplication is madness.
- As a sector, we have to take the process and work on it at the local level.
- People relationships are difficult sometimes and need nurturing.
- Local voice and affordability.
- Keep the foot on the pedal with head start.
- New Zealanders have not bought into regional councils: Regional activities need to be a core of new models. We need to develop form and function with regional activities at the core

- Maori statutory Board is a good partnership model for local government.  
Q: Where to next? A: Incoming government must continue. We need to beef up the Local Government Commission. Be brave. And take a big step forward. With a streamlined Local Government Commission and leave parochialism behind. Put the public first.

**Connor English. Triage. Treat. Thrive.**

Navigating uncertainty. This election is a cost-of-living election.

Asking dumb questions is very important.

Local government is a TMO for their communities. They're constantly trying to back up, review for fault and stop the process. Whereas central government want local government to go faster.

Why are you taking a dollar off the struggling?

**"We need to get the incentives right. Show me the incentive and I will show you the outcome" - Charlie Munger.**

- Chris Hipkins said all the usual things to please his audience.

**Co-Chairs of Maruata.** The fundamentals of engaging with iwi, hapu and Mana whenua.

The Whakatauki starts before, continues during and after the mahi.

Difficult conversations are worthy to have.

In peacetime, work on soft infrastructure. Be a Koha, not a hoha.

Moko Tepania - His favorite Whaka: Whanangitanga.

We need risk aversion, but not over strict as much legislation is guidelines.

Need to know who your iwi and hapu are, what mandates and expertise they bring.

Councilors and mayors need to go with them. Humble yourselves and go to them. Don't talk flash if you lose your core message.

Takahe = Unhelpful, hurtful or harmful.

Need a Memorandum of Partnership, not a MOU.

### **3:00 PM Refocus.**

**What local government needs next.** Honourable Simon Watts National Party Address.

Thanks for the Head Start work. We have a basis now. Resilience and adaptation. Thanks for leadership and work in adverse events.

LG investment is not wasted. Amalgamation will happen. Head start legislation will be in by mid 27.

No regional councils after next term 2028.

Managed Retreat - who's going to pay? It's very complex. Capping will ensure affordability for ratepayers.

Unfunded mandates- How do we keep that all going under rates cap? The answer is we look at what is outside core services.

How will you reinstate trust in local government when central government has had negative messaging? A: Clear, signal and message that we are committed to communities. We need to embed certainty in reform. Central government acknowledged that hard economic recovery phase. We are New Zealand on the up, in two years we will all be in a better place.

**Creative New Zealand.** Janine Parkinson. Trimmer \*\*\*\*\* RA. Central. Uh, creative enterprise places? Competitive places? Creativity is a strategic council asset. 5.6 billion of assets.