



waves

Waitakere Anti-Violence Essential Services

WAVES Trust

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Auckland Council

Submission on the Draft Auckland Plan, 2011

Submitted by:

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We wish to speak with the Council about our submission if that is possible

WAVES Trust is an interagency family violence network organisation. The membership is primarily government and non-government service providers who work in the area of family violence. There are also members who are not specifically family violence agencies but their work complements or supports efforts to reduce violence in Waitakere.

We are committed to strengthening the work of those who support and inform victims of family violence and those who hold offenders accountable and support them to make positive changes to their behaviour. WAVES acts to support and resource all member agencies to practice to the highest standards of integrity and professional ethics.

WAVES Trust provides:

- A networking forum to encourage and support statutory and community services to provide integrated and collaborative services to reduce family violence
- Links to other organisations through the interagency network
- Community advocacy and representation on initiatives that target family violence
- Information about best practice in family violence intervention and support for the implementation of best practice

- Primary prevention, capacity building and education opportunities for those working to reduce family violence
- Contract management of interagency projects and contracts
- Access to current, relevant research
- Monitoring of community initiatives such as the Waitakere Family Violence Court
- An overview of information deficits and initiation of local research

WAVES Trust is a charitable trust. Governance is vested in the Board. There are four staff positions – a Manager, two part-time Coordinators, and an Administrator, as well as one contracted part-time Project Leader.

WAVES Trust acknowledges and supports the submissions presented by Community Waitakere, North Shore Community and Social Services, and ADCOSS.

Background

We present this submission from the viewpoint of NGO organisations focusing on the delivery of services to families and individuals affected by family violence. Family violence-related events are the largest single contributor to police callouts in the Waitakere area (making up over 50% of callouts). In 2009 police made over 2,000 arrests for family violence-related offending. Research suggests that over the course of a year, 5.7% of ever-partnered Auckland women will be physically or sexually assaulted by a current or former intimate partner. Longitudinal studies have found that 20–40% of young adults had during their childhoods witnessed violence between adults at home and half of these people described living with ongoing violence as children. Family violence intersects with a number of social issues affecting Aucklanders today including poverty and unemployment, child abuse, and social inequities. Family violence is one of the most pressing issues facing the Waitakere community and WAVES Trust believes that this statement is relevant for the Auckland region too.

Summary

We believe that the wellbeing of people and the promotion of strong local communities where residents' needs are heard and met must be at the heart of the Auckland Plan. The Auckland Plan's directives on children and the 'Southern Initiative' (pp.50–53) are laudable and a most welcome direction for the new Council. We believe that these strategies provide good examples of bringing people into focus within the Plan. However, we also feel that these strategies are too limited in their scope and considerable work is needed to integrate a people-focused and social infrastructure approach across the whole Plan. This is not likely to be achieved quickly and we suggest that Council:

1. investigate models through which to improve communications with social service sectors and networks throughout the Auckland region, and
2. investigate frameworks for assessing the impact of Council policies on communities and people, with an emphasis on minimising harms.

Submission

WAVES Trust is actively involved in the family Violence sector in West Auckland, from its position on the Waitakere Task Force on family violence (formerly the Mayoral Taskforce on family violence) to its support of Tatai Atawhai (Maori Advisory to the task force) to its support of the network of providers of services in the West Auckland community.

WAVES Trust would welcome the adoption of the Taskforce model across Auckland and a regional taskforce that would influence and support the work of the National Taskforce on family violence. A unique aspect of the Taskforce is the position of a Family Violence Project leader who support the work of the Taskforce and also plays an active role in primary prevention work on the community, supporting and being frontline in such initiatives as White Ribbon Day, etc. and providing an opportunity for the NGO sector to work with and liaise with the Council on forums such as the Social policy and community development forum.

WAVES Trust acknowledges Community Waitakere's submission drawing attention to the lack of overt discussion about people as the strategic drivers of the Plan and the need for emphasis on social infrastructure.¹ North Shore Community and Social Services suggest that Council must implement a Social Development Plan alongside the Spatial Plan.² In this submission we endorse these views and add our concerns that social service sectors must have a mechanism through which to communicate with Council about social issues affecting local communities and regionally. We feel that the Draft Auckland Plan does not engage sufficiently with 'how' council will inform and implement its targets in relation to people and presents insufficient opportunities to develop relationships with social services sectors.

We agree that there is urgent need in South Auckland for the Southern Initiative and for a children's plan across Auckland. But other sectors of the population and regional communities are equally needy and should not be left behind. The elderly or the unemployed for example, can be the forgotten sector in our populations just as frequently as the young. Likewise, the social and economic problems experienced by those in the poorest areas of Ranui are similar to those of their peers in Mangere. We believe that people-focused strategies should be embedded across the whole Plan rather than isolated to particular age-groups or geographic locations.

We are concerned that the apparent mechanisms for feeding information about social needs from service providers and local communities to Council have not engaged with providers in meaningful ways. The first of these mechanisms is the Social Policy Forum (SPF). WAVES Trust had hoped that the SPF would provide Council with both strategic direction on social policy needs within the Region and ensure Council accountability to social service networks. Our submission to the SPF Discussion Document in May 2010 highlighted the crucial role that the former Mayoral Taskforce on Family Violence (now the Waitakere Taskforce) and its Advisory Group played in linking Waitakere City Council with the family violence sector, including both statutory agencies and NGOs. We suggested that

¹ Pat Watson, Manager Community Waitakere, 'Submission to the Draft Auckland Plan from Community Waitakere, October 2011, pp. 1–2.

² See <http://www.nscss.org.nz/node/844>

this model could be adopted regionally and across multiple sectors to inform the SPF about issues faced by local communities and reproduce the robust relationship between communities and the new Auckland Council that the family violence sector has previously enjoyed with Waitakere City Council.³

Our suggestion does not appear to have been taken up. To date, little information is available about the SPF, other than its membership, or how it has determined its priorities.⁴ There has been some criticism of the SPF and Council for inadequate attention to the structures required to implement the goals the SPF sets.⁵ To the best of our knowledge there is no information publicly available to communities on how they can support the SPF or contribute their views to its members.

The Social and Community Development Forum is another mechanism that has not delivered on its apparent potential to foster communication between social service sectors and Council on social issues. In August 2011 WAVES Trust complained about the processes driving the recent family violence-themed Forum. The agenda at that meeting paid inadequate attention to regional and ethnic diversity in the family violence sector and prioritised hearing the views of a limited membership interest group promoting a sensationalist agenda that did not have regional support.⁶ Although one outcome of this Forum is a regional hui on family violence, it is unlikely to influence the Council's Auckland Plan.

Without good communication with local and regional social service sectors it is easy to lose sight of the range and diversity of social need across the Auckland region. Council has a duty to ensure that its processes do not silence some sectors or privilege others. But we believe that Council must also put in place processes that foster greater engagement with social service sectors across Auckland. Such developments must stand alongside a framework for evaluating the impact of Council activities and policies on people within local communities especially those most in need of social support. Good relationships between Council and the social services sector will enhance these activities and ensure that the Council receives timely information about the changing needs of its residents.

We suggest therefore that Council:

1. investigate models through which to improve communications with social service sectors and networks throughout the Auckland region, and
2. investigate frameworks for assessing the impact of Council policies on communities and people, with an emphasis on minimising harms.

We thank Council for the opportunity to submit on the Auckland Plan and look forward to the opportunity to discuss these matters further with you.

Poto Williams, Manager, WAVES Trust

³ Tiaria Fletcher, 'A Submission on the Discussion Document: Auckland Social Policy Forum', May 2010.

⁴ See <http://cometeducationtrust.wordpress.com/tag/auckland-social-policy-forum/>

⁵ See note 2.

⁶ Tiaria Fletcher, Manager WAVES Trust to Auckland Social and Community Development Forum, 15 August 2011.