

Working Towards an Inclusive Society

By Beate Matthies, Chair, Auckland District Council of Social Services

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At our recent **AGM** we were asked for the September / October magazine. This is our September / October magazine, even if you have only received it in November!

Here, we would like to remind you that you are all invited to share your agency news, to send us your ads for specific events, or to tell us about your challenges, struggles, and positive experiences.

We held our **AGM** on 18 October. It had been deferred due to a lack of quorum in June. We were told it was difficult for staff to attend.

We would appreciate your feedback for future events, e.g. having the **AGM** on a weekend or in the evening? We understand that some of you just don't have the resources to send someone to come for an **AGM**. Attending an **AGM** is not a favourite occupation, however it is a legal requirement and a chance to contribute to our views and suggestions for future events.

This time, our **AGM** guest speaker was *Prof Dr John Raeburn*. He has written a wonderful article about his current project **Planetary Wellbeing**, which was published in our July / August edition of *Community Network*.

In his presentation he gave us some background to the project. Starting with the initiative *Community Push* in the early 1970s, in which mental health patients were asked for the first time what they



John Raeburn



needed. The idea was to make it possible for these patients to live in the community rather than in hospitals or institutions. The pillars of this approach were two principles:

① **Sense of Control**

② **Sense of Community**

Now, more than 40 years later, we are aware of challenges regarding Climate Change, food production, and health promotion. Everything is interconnected. However, the two principles are still the same.

John quoted *Pete Seeger*, who said:

“Participation ... that’s what’s gonna save the human race.”

Participation, community and inter-connectedness are key words.

John Raeburn also expressed his gratitude to *ADCOSS* who gave him the opportunity to start the exposure of this concept of **Planetary Wellbeing**. It started with this magazine about one year ago when he wrote the article **Supercommunity: Could it save the world?** (In case you have missed this article, please check our website. The article is available under *Resources*.)

The more recent article by *John Raeburn*, *Ruth Herd*, and *Sione Tu’itahi* with the title **Planetary Wellbeing** was published in our magazine only three months ago. Today, the initiative has taken off in six communities in Auckland!

In the discussion that followed *John’s* presentation, an *ADCOSS* member drew our attention to the fact that the concept of wellbeing is also an essential part of the Government’s current *Building Act 2004*¹, where it says that:

“... buildings have attributes that contribute appropriately to the health, physical independence and wellbeing of the people who use them

It is often said that we humans are social creatures. We are not made to live all by ourselves. Individualism is a development within a society. When we

1. www.building.govt.nz/building-code-compliance/how-the-building-code-works/building-act-2004

are talking about “individualists”, we are not referring to people who withdraw from everything and lead the life of hermits. Rather, we are thinking of people who first take care of themselves, who are independent, and self-reliant.

This can be a way of survival, but it can be at the expense of others and can have a negative impact on other people’s lives, in which case it is more like *Darwin’s* principle of “the survival of the fittest”.

All cultures I am aware of, started as a community. A community that supports each other and takes care of each other. Unless their own survival is at risk, these original cultures show a great sense of solidarity.

Thanks to today’s indigenous cultures, we are made aware of this human characteristic. The other day, *Senator Pat Dodson*, a Yawuru man from Broome, Western Australia described the three concepts of his indigenous tradition²:

- ① **mabu garrungu(nil)**: a strong community – the wellbeing of all is paramount,
- ② **mabu buru**: a strong place and a good country,
- ③ **mabu liyan**: a healthy spirit and good feeling.



Pat Dodson

When we last reviewed our **ADCOSS Mission** and **Vision** statements, we committed ourselves to initiatives such as **Planetary Wellbeing**. Here is our **ADCOSS Vision**:

“An inclusive society with active citizenship, active participation, mutual respect, valuing everybody equally, with opportunity for everyone to develop their full potential and to live a dignified and fulfilling life.”

Our members are doing wonderful work for our community – and we would love to hear more about it. Please share it with us so that we can also support one another with the goal to live in a truly “inclusive society”.

2. www.mercatornet.com/careful/view/an-aboriginal-viewpoint-on-euthanasia-in-australia/21612