

## 20. LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE REPORT

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The following report has been received from the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board Chairperson, Mike Mora.

“The Conference was held in Christchurch at the Convention Centre, 10 – 12 July and attended by 500 delegates and guests.

I attended on Monday and Tuesday with the Powhiri (a very memorable challenge) and welcome by our Mayor Gary Moore.

Monday was a day of listening to keynote speakers and meeting delegates from around our country over cups of tea/coffee and scrumptious nibbles. Monday evening was a highlight with the conference dinner at Wigram Air Force World.

The speakers on Monday were very interesting with the Lord Mayor of Brisbane City, the Right Honourable Jim Soorley, on the topic of “Creating the Cities of the future and the role of Local Government”. Jim was a very interesting speaker (an ex Catholic Priest) who was determined to make Brisbane a better place to live. Jim was followed by another very fine speaker Hekia Parata – Ngai Tahu speaking on “The Treaty and Local Government – Fit for the Future”. The other highlight of Monday’s speakers was of course the Hon. Sandra Lee, Minister of Local Government, who spoke on devolving more responsibilities from Central Government to Local Government.

Tuesday I attended panel presentation/discussions on “Environment and infrastructure”. These sessions were mostly listening to the speakers and some questions being answered. The highlight on Tuesday was an address by our Prime Minister Helen Clark who supports Local Government and encourages its involvement in the social areas, to build better, stronger Communities.

I appreciated the opportunity to attend the Conference, it was a great experience, but not what I expected. I felt there was very little input to Local Government New Zealand from the delegates. I expect conferences to be an opportunity to network, formulate policy and discuss and debate issues surrounding Local Government – not just be an audience to be talked to.

The other issue that I was uncomfortable with was the cost. I felt that if all Local Government Conferences were similar in format then it was a very expensive exercise in mustering up a large audience to listen to people talk to you on Local Government matters. In saying that I feel that I should be pro-active and suggest a more inclusive and productive format for future Conferences.”