

Community Recovery from COVID-19

Introduction

The Hurunui District is strong and resilient. During lockdown they took ownership of their individual communities and really looked out for one another and played by the rules in a united front. The use of telephone trees and looking after their neighbours were key successful ways of connection and wellbeing for the people. During the lockdown period the community team, with the attendance of the Mayor Marie Black, ran a series of 'Listen' community zooms. The idea behind this was to show the communities that the council cares and want to hear what is happening on the ground. The themes that emerged directly impact the community; however some are outside of the council's remit, but are noted because they impact the service plan and delivery. This initiative continues and is called 'Strengthening Communities' Listen – Support - Grow.

Our Key Principles for Community Recovery Planning

- To understand the context and social needs of Hurunui District residents.
- To develop a recovery program that promotes community led recovery and supports community leaders and members to manage their own recovery.
- To work in line with the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities.
- To communicate effectively, openly and honestly with Hurunui District residents.
- To support and enhance community capacity by helping to build on current community, individual and organisation capacities and capabilities.
- To encourage our communities to think broadly and creatively about their future.
- To build on our experience and knowledge in leading in previous crises. We are constantly reminded of the importance of connected communities with a resilient attitude. Our response will be informed by our previous experience, national and regional priorities but especially the information gathered by thorough initial consultation with each community.

Community

The Hurunui is, and continues to be a fantastic place to live. Through our initial consultation we know that recovery is not a 'one size fits all' approach as each Hurunui community has different needs. Through adversity often comes strength, resilience and appreciation. The Community Team's role will be to listen, support and grow so that communities and individual's wellbeing is enhanced. We know, through our consultation that.....

1. Wellbeing is enhanced when people are connected.
2. All our communities have their own identity, it is not a one size fits all approach.
3. The Hurunui District is a resilient community.
4. Local knowledge and relationship building are key to successful engagement.

Recommendations for action:

- Listen, support and grow communities.
- Take a more deliberate stance in supporting community connections.
- Encourage grass roots, community-led projects for effective local community building.
- Proactively encourage network building, as a means to share, learn and collaborate.
- Actively seek to create efficiencies and reduce double-ups by encouraging collaboration and innovation.

Individual Residents

We know that there is significant hardship in the Hurunui now and this is likely to increase when the wage subsidies stop. This will affect individuals and families who have never been in the situation of having to ask for help. There will be a need for recovery to be flexible. Individuals needs may be about connecting them with the right person or agency, ensuring they have the right information and can access the services they need in a timely manner. We know, thorough our consultation that...

1. There is a need for communities to re-engage in feel good events and activities for social connection.
2. There is interest in guest speakers to come to the district around the wellbeing focus.
3. Our migrant community are feeling anxious and unsure of what their future is.
4. The community asks that we are visible and transparent with our plans in community.
5. There continues to be a lack of local services in the district, many of our older community struggle to travel to their medical services.
6. Social and economic impacts are greater on vulnerable and marginalised populations.

Recommendations for action:

- Work collaboratively alongside health and social service agencies to support the recovery.
- Support community groups to access resources from the appropriate places.
- Ensure that Council engagement and community building initiatives actively work to reduce barriers and enable involvement of all our communities.
- Actively support networks between agencies and community groups.
- Recognise the importance of wellbeing to social and economic recovery and the ability of communities and individuals to adapt and respond to initiatives which promote this
- Be prepared to build on local resilience and self-reliance due to the global nature of COVID-19

Governance

We know that in the Hurunui, communities feel ownership and empowerment by being involved in the solution seeking process and then the practical responses. We know that the power of holistic, sustainable recovery lies ultimately with the locals. The role of the Community Team is to be a 'guide by the side' to enable communities to recover and grow. The Community Team will be working with local committees to ensure they have great relationships with funders and support services. We know, through our consultation that....

1. Issues, and their impacts, need to be investigated from a community perspective to ensure that all interests are represented.
2. Community committees are key local place-based community representatives and advocates.
3. Transparency and clarity are essential to foster confidence in democratic processes.
4. Communities expect to see a council that is visible and making a difference.

Recommendations for action:

- Build a strong governance base in communities through connection and learning opportunities.
- Hurunui District Council provides prudent financial and personnel management that enables recovery to be practical and community based.
- Local committees are given the support and information to be responsive to the needs of their communities.

The Economy

Hurunui has a strong agricultural focus with sheep beef and dairy farming. There are also vineyards, forestry and olives to name a few. In Level 4 over 60% of the Hurunui workforce kept on working as essential workers so it is well placed to recover quicker than other parts of New Zealand. Tourism plays a strong part in Hurunui's economy and profile too. 13.4% of jobs in the Hurunui depend on tourism. There are approximately 400,000 guest nights in the Hurunui per year along with nearly 400 businesses based on tourism. Hanmer is approximately 80% domestic tourist based but this varies depending on the type of business and the clientele it markets to. That said, there will be fallout from the Covid recession through businesses closing, job losses and social needs increasing. We know, thorough our consultation that..

1. The reduction in tourism will impact the Hurunui District.
2. Unemployment is likely to rise in some areas.
3. A broad economic slowdown will impact on community resources.
4. The social impact will be significant and for a long period of time.

Recommendations for action:

- Building a strong relationship with Enterprise North Canterbury so that the Hurunui District can enhance employment and re-training opportunities.
- Listen to businesses and work together as an Advisory group.
- Look for opportunity and diversity for the Hurunui District.

- Work in parallel with Hurunui Tourism so that our community work is effective and complimentary.
- To look at economic recovery through a lens of enhancing Cultural, Environmental or Social opportunities.