



Education, health and homes build social infrastructure

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Although occupied with the Local Government Commission, consultancy assignments and boards, I am most busy in the social infrastructure space

It's exciting to be involved in an area where many committed business and community people are interacting to address the challenges of better social outcomes in our communities.

Recently I attended a function hosted by Westpac to launch their considerable sponsorship of a programme called Kootuitui ki Papakura.

Westpac and other generous organisations are sponsoring through the Middlemore Foundation a concept of interweaving education, health and homes in a number of low decile schools in Papakura.

The educational strand is based around Manaiaakalani, a successful model of learning utilising digital technology in schools throughout Glen Innes and Tamaki in Auckland. The concept involves every child receiving a Chromebook, paid for by parents or guardians, to facilitate educational learning.

The schools share common IT infrastructure and teaching methodology, with extensive educational support and resources provided to teachers. The concept is powerful, not only for a significant lift in educational achievement but also because it facilitates clusters of schools to actively collaborate on a shared journey.

This successful community-based concept, supported by academic assessment of educational outcomes by the University of Auckland, has spawned six new Manaiaakalani clusters throughout New Zealand, including Papakura.

In Papakura, the educational concept has been expanded to include health professionals located in every participant school to reduce incidence of rheumatic fever, skin diseases and the range of other Third World health issues found in our poorer communities.

The third strand is homes, based on the principle that to deliver good educational and health outcomes, children need to live in safe and secure homes. This involves

support for high-need families as well as addressing the poor quality of largely rental housing found in these communities.

Housing helps

It is a poor reflection on our once home-owning society that many schools in poorer communities have literally no parent or guardian who own their own homes. As a result, combined with the lack of long-term rental security, these schools have high roll turnover, sometimes exceeding 100 per cent per annum. The goal is to reduce this turnover by the provision of better housing, tenure and security, interwoven with good education and health provision.

Kootuitui ki Papakura is currently developing its long-term strategic outcomes. The community of schools is challenging itself as to what the wider community might look like through a successful journey of enhanced educational, health and housing outcomes.

This might include, with the support of business, a clear pathway to jobs linked to the huge new industrial park being developed in adjoining Drury. Likewise it may provide pathways to sporting achievement utilising the neighbouring Bruce Pulman Park, a stunning sporting facility developed by a local business entrepreneur of the same name.

Indeed, with excellent learning, good health and safe and secure homes, many other pathways and opportunities will arise. Our challenge is to provide community-based leadership, good governance and excellent systems, working effectively alongside generous corporates, philanthropic trusts and business leaders. The ingredients are there for this to happen.

The cost of this programme is slightly less than \$2 million per annum. With the support of Westpac and other corporates and trusts this is a very powerful model of business working alongside and within communities to build social infrastructure in our

most deprived communities. The initiative of Manaiaakalani and the Middlemore Foundation, the latter being the sponsor of the Kidz First hospital for Counties Manukau, is true community and business leadership.

A similar community-focused project is Sistema Aotearoa, a concept of using classical music as a community development tool in low-income areas. Originating in Caracas, the concept has expanded across the globe, including New Zealand.

Working with seven contributing schools, the programme is in its sixth year, with over 2,500 students between 2 years and 14 years having participated. In 2015 Sistema Aotearoa delivered over 68,150 child contract tuition hours.

More than 300 school children have been learning classical music for five years, a commitment of children, parents and guardians of daily after-school tuition and holiday programmes. More than 20 tutors from throughout Auckland contribute to the programme.

Results are stunning, building confidence and skill amongst largely Maori and Pasifika children. The launch of the Otago Youth Orchestra in front of a packed Auckland Town Hall is but one of the programme highlights. Sistema Aotearoa has recently been established as a trust separate from the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, which first developed the concept in Otago.

Like Manaiaakalani, Sistema has expanded to other parts of New Zealand. Both are community-based concepts, with support from corporates and philanthropic trusts. As a result, these concepts are nimble, adaptable and fast-moving. They create civic cohesion, pride and achievement and build social infrastructure, which is as important as pipes, roads and buildings.

Leigh Auton is a Local Government Commissioner, a Director of Auton & Associates with 35 years' local government experience, a chairman/director/trustee on several boards and provides consulting advice to public and private sector companies