



NZ's Community Trusts Vow To Use Collective Might To Tackle Nationwide Issues

ROTORUA, 28 November 2022: New Zealand's community trusts, who collectively manage \$5 billion in assets, are exploring how they can pursue major housing and climate change initiatives on a nationwide scale.

The Combined Community Trusts 2022 Conference has just wrapped up in Rotorua, with funders looking to work collaboratively on two of the most pressing issues facing New Zealanders.

Traditionally, each trust works in its own region and between them they grant over \$150m annually to local community groups and projects. However, due to the extreme challenges around the lack of healthy, affordable and secure housing for Kiwis in need, as well as climate change and biodiversity issues, a "revolutionary" approach is needed. The trusts are looking to collaborate at both a granting and investment level to help play their part in addressing these issues.

It is the first time in four years the heads and staff of all 12 community trusts, plus several Bay of Plenty-based trusts and their investment advisors, have come together to discuss using their collective resources on a national scale to tackle significant issues facing Kiwis.

"Philanthropy has an important role to play in addressing key challenges in our society," says BayTrust Chief Executive Alastair Rhodes who hosted the conference. "Our conference theme was 'working together to accelerate bold and meaningful change across Aotearoa' and that's exactly what we intend to do.

"We need to be revolutionary and in these challenging times, funders must use all their tools. We have traditionally focussed on using granting to help achieve our mission and we will continue to do this. In the past 30 years we have collectively granted nearly \$2 billion into our communities yet at the same time our key wellbeing metrics (environment, housing, inequality, child poverty) have all worsened. If we are to truly make a meaningful change in our communities then we must now explore advocacy, leadership and using our collective investment bases to make a difference and fulfil our purpose."

Over 200 delegates attended the two-day conference at the Rotorua Energy Events Centre which is estimated to have pumped around \$500,000 into the local economy. The delegates included the CEOs, chairs, trustees and key staff from Foundation North, Toi Foundation, Rātā Foundation, Trust Waikato, BayTrust, Eastern & Central Community Trust, Otago Community Trust, Community Trust South, Wellington

Community Trust, Community Trust of Mid & South Canterbury, Whanganui Community Foundation and West Coast Community Trust. Several Bay of Plenty trusts also attended including TECT, Acorn, Trust Horizon and Rotorua Trust.

Mele Wendt, the Convenor of Community Trust Chairs, says the conference went extremely well and Rotorua proved to be a wonderful host city. "Rotorua has had a tough few years due to COVID and the emergency housing situation. But the city was really open for business. The hospitality we received was fantastic and all the local attractions our delegates attended were back up and running fully which was heartening to see."

During the conference, opportunities and challenges for New Zealand were discussed in depth, along with how Kiwis can live in harmony with the natural environment, sustainable investment strategies, and affordable secure housing.

"By workshopping these topics, delegates shortlisted their top ideas on how community trusts can make a meaningful difference in this space," Wendt says.

"We've generated a number of great ideas at this conference which trust CEOs will now flesh out in more detail. The plan is to come together again next May and see if we can develop business cases to actually translate those ideas into concrete action."

Keynote speakers at the conference included Rt Hon Sir Bill English, Climate Change Commission Chief Executive Jo Hendy, business leader and Radio NZ Deputy Chair Melissa Clark-Reynolds, and Trans-Atlantic rowing race winner Kevin Biggar who now inspires people to take on big challenges.

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