



Department of Social Work and Community Development
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Structures and Strategies Revisited: A comparative storying of five social service and community support organisations in Otago, New Zealand

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Introduction

In 2003 we published a monograph titled “Structures and Strategies, A narrative analysis of eleven community organisations in Otago”. In this work we explored the governance and organisational practices of 11 community organisations in the Otago area. We chose a wide range of community social service, sporting and community development organisations for this study.

In this new work we have honed our exploration to include only those organisations that undertake social service and community development work and have re-interviewed five organisations to track their development and progress over the 6 years. The organisations included in this work are

- Anglican Family Care Centre (previously Anglican Methodist Family Care Centre)
- Arahina House
- Fernhill Community Group
- Pasifica Women, and
- St Kilda Community Club

In all the organisations, except Pacifica Women, the respondents were new but had the opportunity to re-read the transcripts for their organisation from 2002 as part of the preparation for the interview.

Structure

We have included both the original 2002 narrative and the 2008 narrative so that the reader can see the shifts and movements over the 6 year period. We conclude by highlighting some of the changes that have taken place and identify themes that have emerged.

Methodology

Narrative analysis refers to a group of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common the form of a story. As nations and governments construct preferred narratives about history, social movements, social service organisations, community development organisations, and individuals construct stories of their experience. What makes such diverse texts “narrative” is sequence and consequence: events are selected by the story teller, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience. Storytellers interpret the world and their experience in it; they sometimes create moral tales constructing how they believe the world should be. Narratives represent storied ways of knowing and communicating (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997). We focus here on the oral narratives of organisational experience of the respondent organisations.

The use of narrative analysis is an appropriate research technique for this research as it offers a dynamic, rich, holistic perspective to the organisations studied (Eastoe, Haire & Rees 1991:1). Eastoe, Haire and Rees explain that narrative analysis

"allows the researcher to see how respondents impose their order on experience and environment by commenting upon relationships between events and actions through stories. Therefore, narrative analysis enables the researcher to identify the transitional stages leading to a given situation, and to identify similarities and differences between groups." (1999:1)

This technique is best suited to studies that involve small numbers of respondents, deal with complex issues that require an understanding of the subtleties of the information gathered (ibid).

The formal structure of a narrative revolves around the concept of a story; with a beginning, middle and end.

Czarniawska (1999:22) outlines the possible uses of the narrative approach within the context of studying organisations. She breaks these up into three sections that again mirroring a beginning, middle and end. These are:

Beginning

- Watch how stories are being made
- Collect stories

Middle

- Interpret the stories (what do they say?)
- Analyse the stories (how do they say it?)
- Deconstruct the stories (unmake them?)

End

- Put together your own story
- Set it against/together with other stories

Within the context of this study narrative theory offers a way of charting how context has changed over time from the perspective of multiple, possibly conflicting, viewpoints.

Method

We are the remaining members of the project team that was established in 2001. That team, who all had an advisory role with community organisations, felt that the collective knowledge of these individuals represented the beginning stage of Czarniawska's model that, 'watched how stories have been made'. The original project team nominated organisations they felt offered a range of perspectives on what it is to be a community organisation. The intent was to include organisations concerned with social service provision, sport, the environment, neighbourhoods, the arts, Pacific peoples and Maori.

Because of our particular interest in social service and community development organisations for this work we narrowed the range of organisations to those that offered these services to their communities.

Ethical approval was gained from the University of Otago for the study and we, and a research assistant, collected the stories. The stories were collected during 2008 from five organisations originally approached in 2002.

Each narrative involved an initial 1-2 hour interview, which was taped. The interview transcription was edited and sent back to the organisation for their checking, editing and approval.

In order to maintain rigour and authenticity as researchers the project has followed guidelines offered to qualitative researchers by Holliday (2002). These were:

- The research question should remain open ended enough to mitigate any underlying agendas held the researchers. This allowed the research process to expand research variables into new areas not necessarily foreseen. This was achieved by introducing themes rather than specific questions to respondents. The themes were: life history, influence of the external environment on the group, influence of internal dynamics, key success factors and challenges. By avoiding a set list of questions this provided the organisations with the freedom to contribute in ways they felt appropriate. The result is evident in the edited interviews as the emphasis of each story differs according to the critical issues identified by each participant.
- Researcher bias was acknowledged thereby recognising that no research is value-free. At all stages participants were able to direct the interpretation of the research question.
- The study was confined to Dunedin groups in order to ensure that the research setting had a sense of boundedness (culture, time and place) enabling it to provide a variety of relevant, interconnected, accessible data.

The methodological approach was located in a discipline (narrative analysis) that allowed for power sharing and therefore positioned the study ideologically with respect to the work of Foucault and Freire whose approach to power relations acknowledges the importance of pluralism. This is discussed further in the conclusion.

2002: Anglican Methodist Family Care

In the 1960's, much discussion took place about possible church union between Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists and the Churches of Christ. In Dunedin, the Anglicans had a tradition of childcare, with orphanages and also a big foster care programme and the Methodists had a number of programmes including family welfare and a health camp at Company Bay. In this context, formal arrangements were made between the two churches to combine services, and in 1970 the Anglican Methodist Family Care Centre was opened. Board membership was half Methodist and half Anglican.

Funding

While funding from the two churches has varied, it has never reached 50/50 though there have never been any problems with that arrangement.

When the agency started, all funding came from the churches. They paid for the entire operation up till the early 1980s. When the government started offering grants to organisations doing family work, these organisations then started to grow. Then the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act set up new structures and increasing government money flowed through to the non-government sector. Nowadays we receive about five percent of our income from the churches.

For example, in 1987 the Labour Government put two or three million dollars into what they called "Home Builders" for home-based family support. While we have changed the name, a similar programme continues to run today, still funded by a Government contract. That Labour government also set up what was called "District Executive Committees" and sub-regional committees to oversee youth residences. The District Executive Committees operated for about four years, during which they had oversight of Social Welfare. In those days the Department of Social Welfare delivered social work services and also managed benefits.

From the mid- 1980s there was a lot of discussion about the need for funder/provider split, as at that point most of the funding came through the service provided by Department of Child Youth and Family. By about 1992 funding was accessed through contracts negotiated with Community Funding Agencies, which operated out of a business environment. This changed the climate hugely for service providers. Fortunately for Anglican Methodist Family Care, (AMFC), the government saw as priorities the budgeting, counselling, and home builder programmes we were currently offering.

Staffing

Anglican Methodist Family Care began with two staff. Now we have 47 and we are one of the biggest contractors with Child, Youth and Family in New Zealand. One of our biggest initiatives came in about 1992/1993, when there was no single organisation in Dunedin that could offer foster care. Before this, both AMFC and Presbyterian Social Services provided some services, but the new CYPF legislation required much more

oversight and accountability of children in care. We set up a Child and Family Support Service, a challenge because caring for children who need foster care is difficult. There were different feelings among staff about us taking on a contract like this, so there was a lot of discussion.

Governance and management

The board has also experienced changes during its time. Up until about eight years ago the board met three or four times a year. These days, the board is made up of a smaller number of people who meet on a monthly basis. Currently, the board is undergoing evaluating the direction it will take in the future. For the board to function well, it relies on the guidance of staff to ensure that the Board's vision for the Agency is reflective of the needs of the community.

At one stage we had a flat management structure where decisions were made at staff meetings, but this became more difficult because of the increase in staff numbers. We now have monthly Co-ordinator meetings drawing in staff working in the South and Central Otago areas. Generally people have been supportive of each other, with a great team spirit present, which has become even more apparent as the staff numbers have increased.

It is important for us that staff are happy in their work, Otherwise it is difficult for them to work alongside clients, providing welfare and support services. Maintaining job satisfaction has become a challenge at times, as staff have had to work harder to meet the needs of their clients and fulfill contract requirements. As an agency we have regular agency training together, and recently we had a night away to Berwick together to nurture good relationships, and enhance work satisfaction.

Political policies and agency response

Over the years the agency has taken some chances. The advent of contracting, and the funding avenues opening up through the Community Funding Agency, enabled us to increase the services we provided in the Central Otago area, and to extend our services into the South Otago area. In 1992, under the direction of the Minister of Social Welfare at the time (Jenny Shipley) funding became available for a budgeting service. She believed that budgeting was the answer to everything. There is less funding available for budgeting services now than when it first was funded, so we restrict our service to family budgeting only.

Around 1986, the Labour government began tightening up on resources available for the special needs sector. However, the most significant milestone was when the National Government reduced benefit entitlements in 1991. Many people receiving benefits saw them decline between \$27 & \$80 per week, this decision created immense stress on agency workers. Over a four-month period I gave twenty-four talks and sixteen sermons in the hope of raising the consciousness of people about the consequences of the then government's policy changes.

In 1989, 389 people came to us for food parcels in the year, but by 1994 we were seeing

\$3,500. The growth was horrendous. Currently, food parcel demand has decreased slightly as unemployment has dropped and Work & Income New Zealand are generally better at accommodating people's needs now than they were in the past.

Up until 1992 the food bank was run by whichever staff were available and whose clients needed food. The changes in policy led to creating a position specifically for welfare interviews and to manage the food bank. About this time I was the Anglican representative on the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services. The Council began researching the issues around food banks, and some time after that the Otago University began researching similar topics. It was quite daunting for an agency worker to hear mothers saying that they could not feed their children. One story I recall was about children who were taking turns at going to school because there was only one pair of shoes between them. These were 1920's depression stories being lived out again 70 years later.

The business model

What are the impacts of the business model? I don't think this model has had a huge effect on the day-to-day running, but its impact is certainly evident. For a period of time we had annual contracts only. It is unsettling for us not knowing if we would have funding from year to year. It is less challenging now that we have some longer-term contracts that help to provide security from a service perspective.

The longer term contracts were not always straight forward, however. I remember when the National Government introduced some three year funding contracts, but did not guarantee all the money, meaning that each year we still had to put in a new unit cost.

We are getting less money from churches now, and we find it difficult when we see needs and are unable to address them. Money from the churches in the past enabled us to attend to the needs. It is a challenge for us as an agency when we identify needs that we are unable to secure funding for.

The future

About five years ago we evaluated our service and planned a direction for the future. It was clear to us that we were providing family focused services. Projects over the years have included our involvement with the community house in Stenhope Crescent, a group for the elderly in Caversham and a budgeting service for people with special needs such as psychiatric illness. We believed that all these services connect to family in some way. However, our new focus has been to develop a one-stop-shop to enable families to access a variety of help easily. The main indicator of success is seeing families sort themselves out and turn their lives around, given the opportunity to give life a go.

2008: Anglican Family Care

Growth, crisis and re-structuring

2003 is the year I came here as the director, and very much I see the mark of the previous director on the first interview, who was here for 23 years. So in the life of this organisation, just that change had a big impact. About the year 2000, this agency, effectively doubled in size with the taking on of the Family Start contract. There was a fairly dramatic kind of event in the year 2003 in May when the manager of Family Start died suddenly, and so when I arrived in August, the staff, the board and even the clients, were still absorbing the enormity of that. Then we were in an environment where the future of that contract was very uncertain, and the Family Start programme across New Zealand was under scrutiny because there had been some stunning incidences of it going wrong, in terms of the providers' performance, and so that, on top of the death of the manager there was also uncertainty about the future of delivery. What I've had to do lead through some very big changes at a governance level particularly, and in our relationship with our funders, and in managing the staff.

I came into a place where there was a huge desire for things to be different, that was already there before I got here, but nobody was enjoying the grief that was around. Grief in terms of loss, but grief in terms of just real muddle - muddle and confusion and a lack of clarity, quite high apprehension about the retirement of the director, because of course it had been a long, long standing arrangement and that was fear of the unknown, high anxiety, almost to the point of paralysis. Because you see the director's retirement and the death of the Family Start manager happened within several months of each other and so it was this huge amount of change for a group of staff to sustain. So it wasn't actually hard to pull that together because people had had enough. I didn't find entrenched patterns of behaviour or great resistance or any of that - I mean I got stories about the "bad old days and now you're going to fix it all" sort of stuff; well we got over that quite quickly because I wasn't the perfect being who was going to be able to please everybody, and I've had to make some very unpopular decisions, but it's just been really different. Quite different. And my personal leadership style is very different to the previous director's, because she was a very out there person in building relationships, networks, friendships, work and family overlapped a lot, and it was a very social place, and I have a different kind of style.

In those early weeks and months I spent an awful lot of time just with clean pieces of paper and a pencil, redrawing and redrawing models of different ways, and then talking it through with people and doing a lot of listening, and before you worked anything through to the final point of change it was important to have all those consultations.

What I've worked really hard is to stop the dramatic growth and because that was so big and overnight the size doubled and then all the problems that came with it, I think the systems and the structures weren't there to sustain it. My focus over the last 4 years has been really to consolidate, so not to be adding on or looking for extra, but to just tread water a little bit and build up the expertise of the team around me and if anything we might want to downsize a little bit, because, you know - well we did, we were way up in

Alex[andra], and in Wanaka and in Queenstown, and all over the place, and so I've pulled that back, because I didn't know what was happening up there and it was pretty risky stuff, it's high risk work. So it's been about consolidating little pockets of muddle everywhere and just quietly taking them one by one and unravelling them. Perhaps the only thing that we did grow on was the Restorative Justice programme where Moana House and Family Care were running that jointly, as were Presbyterian Support, and now Presbyterian Support withdrew as did Moana House so now we're holding that. We took over all the Presbyterian Support facilitators. So that's been quite a big job, to get that up again, bring together 2 groups of people and having them now work as a team. But we really don't have the capacity to grow because our problem is, that we are 94% funded by government contract, but that's all about funding for services and you have to have an infrastructure to run the services, and with a staff of our size we've got four admin people and myself; so we're just really, the most stretched part of the operation, because we are doing all the fundraising, and reporting against the contracts and the finances and all the personnel, so it's pretty big.

New Ways of Working

I guess I inherited an environment where the previous director was very much into a very hands on, you know, so take for example performance appraisals, and she told me she did performance appraisals for all the staff; and now, there are 48 staff, so I didn't see how that was humanly possible for one person to have an overview of work practice; and the other thing was the divisions; and so you had a Family Start / Family Care division, and so I decided that the next step was to build a senior team around me. And there were all these people called 'service managers' but what they were actually managing was their work practice, but all things to do with staffing, money, budgets, appraisals, pay rises, everything were handled centrally by the director and I decided I really, really needed to build a team; it took probably a year, of working very hard to build a team. So then the next thing was I realised that if I tried to do all those things in an agency of this size I would fall over really, so I had to do some active coaching and teaching of those around me into how to be team leaders and how to manage their little department and how to do their staff appraisals, how do you talk to staff about their salary and terms and conditions; how do you figure out whether you might need to replace cars, all those sorts of things. So now we've got, something I'm very, very proud of, which is a group of people who meet every month and if there's going to be a scrap, they have a scrap right out in the open and it's out in the open and there are no - none of this hostility undercurrents; and we've had quite a lot of situations and circumstances where people have had to cover for other people. We've had extended sickness, we've had people on group work placement etc.; and the goodwill, and the generosity to each other is now fabulous. They will debate and debate the issues around their practice and have very good discussions and debates but when we're up against it, it's a very strong team; so in terms of my achievements I am very, very proud of having got things to that point. I individually supervise all those people, about 8 or 9 who report to me directly; so a lot of one on one coaching, but a lot of work with them together as a group in building that team, just sitting quietly, getting to know each other, taking the time to talk about what's our vision, having that sense of common purpose.

Building models of cultural accountability

There was quite a high level of anxiety about accountability because there have been some major staffing grievance incidences that had arisen from that old stuff. The arrangement was actually working pretty successfully I understand, for the first 2 years, when there was a lot of goodwill and strong relationships but then it took one thing to go wrong, which it stunningly did go wrong in terms of a social worker's practice and there were all sorts of consequences to that and so the board got themselves very caught up and well we're actually accountable for all of this and here we are, big sums of money, contracts, funders, people out there working with high risk families and we need to have a handle on it. But that was a very, very tender area, when I came in. I think there was some lack of understanding of the need to have a relationship with those (Māori and Pacific peoples') different groups. The lack of understanding of how important that is at this level when our people are going into homes, Pacific Island homes, Maori homes, and all the learnings that go with that. But I managed to persuade them that there were enormous merits in (a new approach) and time has shown that that has been a very successful initiative and it's changed the nature of the relationships as we all respect one another on an even footing.

Because I'd worked at the runaka I knew about how you would approach a group and they make this their own selection. And the Otakou runaka actually wrote back and said they had no capacity to appoint anybody but they wished us well and so we then co-opted a Kai Tahu woman, but she is there as an individual in her own right, and we are very clear about that. But we maintain a relationship with the runaka by writing back to them keeping them updated and trying to build an awareness for the staff of those structures. The Arai te Uru Marae Council, I go up there each year and report to them on how we are doing and am available to answer questions. And we try to keep that same sort of profile with the Maori Women's Welfare League, although that's fallen away a little bit because their member has not regularly attended meetings, just really busy.

The Pacific Island community ministers come take stuff back to their church groups, and earlier this year we had a big Pacific Island day which was amazing, like - *hundreds* of people turned out, and we did a showcase thing of our services and in turn they danced and performed and we had a day of just sharing a meal, and it was just amazing the support that we got that day.

So it's about building those relationships, they advise the board, they advise me and they are there to advise the staff and they work in with our kaiwhakarite position, and our Pacific Island adviser, who of course have both been here for many years, so they are the operational level of the cultural perspective, and the board just keeps an eye on everything. On occasion I've had people haul me up and say, "can you explain how such and such has happened, and please don't let that happen again", and it's really good to get that feedback.

Our board who are appointed by the Anglican diocese of Dunedin, are very respectful of people who they recognise to be very senior in their own communities, it's just been about getting to know each other, and they are being proactive in making

recommendations and suggestions and we've picked up on that and quietly developed things.

Changing community needs

In terms of our social services all the staff report to me that, the nature of the issues people are coming to us with is escalating in their complexity and difficulty and seriousness. What was a quite low level preventive intervention 2-3 years ago, we are now walking side by side with Child, Youth & Family Care and Protection, Family Violence, addictions, mental health issues; and working very much in the Strengthening Families model, collaborative practice, and it's just getting more and more difficult. It's not in terms of higher numbers but it's in terms of more complex work. For our food bank and welfare services there's actually been a slight drop back in the numbers because there's fuller employment, there's Working for Families packages; but the people we are seeing are those in quite disadvantaged, marginal type circumstances, and they may never change. You know, your Invalid's Benefit people, a lot of single men; really, really struggling just to keep it together. And they are kind of long term dependency type situations.

We now have a very qualified workforce, pretty much all of them are either tertiary qualified or working towards a qualification and they are doing high risk work, and this year I've had some quite difficult meetings with the PSA around the relativity of our pay scales to those in CYPFS and the government sector because we are actually beginning to do the same work and I know we are not an on-call emergency service, but we are working with very high risk families. The staff work from home, so it's all home based apart from our counselling; and the difference is that they're able to go in there and engage and get to know and build some trusting relationships and sustain things over time; and working through some quite effective changes.

Parenting, children and babies, is our biggest focus. But it's usually one on one with a client family who chooses to engage, so it's a choice, they're voluntary clients, so our guys can get dismissed at any time, and so they've got to work really, really hard to form that trust.

We still have Wide Horizons, and that's school based but it takes children away from school out to adventure-type activities. We do have two Social Workers in Schools, based in schools, and they run the programmes but a lot of our work, the home based family support programme and the Family Start programme is really about doing a good family assessment, and the Family Start is for the new-born babies and they can stay involved usually for 1 year, 2 years, but up to 5 years; and they work alongside parents doing that whole education around parenting and supporting of a lot of other issues.

Funding challenges

Family Start *was* with the District Health Board but is now with Family and Community Services, part of MSD, and that's 100% funded. Social Workers in Schools is 100% funded. So we are actually quite well off. The other CYF contracts are 80% funded, and that's more challenging, because we've got to go looking for Lotteries, and Community Trust, and Pub Charities, and do all that other to get the shortfall of 20%. So 94% of our

total income is now government contract. We get money from the diocese, we get a lot of donations that is what runs our welfare food bank services. But the problem is that you sign up for a contract for 3 years, and we're now in the third of 3 years, at a set price, and there's no adjustment for cost of living, salary increments - salaries is our biggest cost - and so we somehow have to look for other sources of funding to try and allow for those increased costs.

We've failed miserably this year, because we simply haven't been able to pay the salary increments that I think the staff are entitled to, and that's the reason why I've had such a stand-off with the PSA, it's become personal to me that I'm a bit of a cow who won't concede to these demands, but we signed off our budget at \$204,000 in deficit. I can't sustain even that, and that was not building in any salary increases, so it is very tough, and we're going into contract renewal *now*, and we must build in provision for KiwiSaver, cost of living increments for people who've earned it. Some of these guys work very hard, they stay for years in the same job because something keeps them here, there's a great loyalty in spite of the pay inequity, but it is an environment that encourages the highest quality of standards of work, and we recognise that, and as I said it's a very, very strong robust team setting; we have our niggles, but they deal with them.

We have this audit junket that goes on forever, and when we were funded by Health we'd have a health funder, we'd have a CYPFS funder, with Restorative Justice I have a justice - you know - so they all come and open the books and we have to spend days and days providing all this information, they're all looking at the same things, so that's very time consuming. The other funders want accountability reports, I've actually got no problem with that, but it could be streamlined and I know there are efforts to develop kind of integrated contracts within the government sector and I think next year we'll go into something called a "co-funded" arrangement which means instead of having two different funding advisers we might just have one. But to be quite frank with you we never see those people.

Particularly this last year - where FACS and CYPFs have come under MSD, it's again like that custody fight feeling - you know - "oh, we don't know anything about that; no, you'll have to ask them", "No, I can't change this, it's all been set", and there's a great sense of frustration because you can't find out what's really going on.

Even last week we had the national co-ordinator for Family Start down, and they are re-writing all the service specs, and he was very interested in talking the tension between the world of policy and the world of provider; and the real world and the theory, and how the policy people seem to have an awful lot of power and influence, and a purist view of how things should be.

Partnering up

Earlier this year FACS announced this decision to set up an early years hub in South Dunedin and it had a significant amount of money attached to it and some of us in the Strengthening Families management group got quite upset about that because the idea of it was to better co-ordinate services around the early years, the pre-school years. Now, we

work very closely with Plunket and some of those others, and so we got together with them and said, 'well what's this about', and seemingly it's a thing that there are five of them in New Zealand and someone's gone somewhere on a map, picked South Dunedin, wanted all the services located in South Dunedin, so although Dunedin is kind of like a village and the centre of the city *is* the centre, and we don't run on a patch system, there was a requirement that we base our services in South Dunedin and do all these things, disrupting already quite streamlined things; and then, so Plunket, Catholic Social Services and ourselves looked at it very seriously and put in an expression of interest. We thought, well, we could make something of this, there was nearly half a million dollars with it. Then we worked into the night to prepare the application; the day it was due we got an email saying the whole thing had been pulled and they were going to rework the service specs and when they came back. The three of us all looked at them separately and the expectation was that it had a dual governance structure. So we'd have our own boards, and then we'd have this governance confusion with people on it like - very good people, but not people involved in the delivery of services to the early years, and there was an expectation that we report to these people and to our own boards, so at that, I just said no, as I'd just worked the agency out of that kind of muddle and it was just too much for us. Separately Plunket said the same, separately Catholic Social Services said the same, and so we withdrew.

When we withdrew another organisation put in a bid, I believe, but I've heard no formal announcement about that. When we're running services and nearly just not quite viable, the size of the deficit I'm talking about is really scary and as I say, we can't go into expansion mode at all, and what I'm looking at is saying we're going to get the same money for the next 3 years, so I'm looking now at how can we rationalise everything, and not drop jobs, and try and fit within the funding we've got. Because finding other sources of money is difficult.

I had this idea that it was pretty nutty to have four food banks in Dunedin and we did this paper, and thought, couldn't we have one, and there was a woman at the Sallies, and she had the same idea, she came down from Auckland, and she said they don't have all these little food banks; and so we worked it through but in the end it didn't go anywhere, because of the desire for organisations to keep their own values. I thought you could have one big grocery shop, because that's what it is, it's just like running a shop; but no, it didn't work.

We're actually part of some really strong networks in the community and one of the ones that is my favourite is called CHAG, it's the Christian Helping Agencies Group and it's quite funny because there is this other thing called JOG, they're the Joint Operating Group, they're the front line workers who run the food banks, do the budgeting, they're really salt of the earth people, and the CHAG is - we're part of it - Family Works, Catholic Social Services, St Vincent de Paul, and the Sallies. And so we're the big agencies delivering social services and welfare services to the whole area of poverty. And so we find we've got an awful lot in common. And so we have meetings every month, every two months and we fix the world - but amongst that group is kind of like my reference group now, is my key support people in there, very, very good. It's just

developed and I believe it was three years ago, it may have been called the community helping agencies group at one stage, then PANDO developed and it became this community's response to the issues of poverty and PANDO sort of faded away again, and just by chance new people who were appointed to jobs, and I do the mother hen thing and sort of welcome them and say if you need a hand give us a ring and that's formed some very strong networks. It's different to the Strengthening Families group which of course is government and non government. And this year just recently I've been appointed to the National Executive of the Social Services Providers group, which is a national group - it's for all those organisations funded by Child, Youth and Family. We were just up at a national conference in September at Palmerston North, and that's another growing war, to work together.

When you listen to the politicians now they talk about the need to rationalise the sector and that there's too many small providers you know, like 900 providers listed with CYPFS for example, funded by them, and there's quite a lot of pressure to not have lots and lots of little groups popping up. And I suppose - when I change hats - because I do a lot of governance work, I'm on five boards, and I know the amount of infrastructure work that goes into setting up an organisation, doing the strategic plan, doing the budget, getting board members, and I kind of have some sympathy for that point of view, but it takes a lot of hard work in the voluntary sector to get those things up and running, and you're relying on volunteers to sit on boards, you're relying on goodwill and you get someone like me, I've got some native cunning but not a lot of training in things, so I'm always on the scrounge for a bit of free advice, whether it's, or not free, because we pay for it. But I don't do maths, so I need very good financial support; employment relations are so complex now, that I'm on the phone to the Employer's Association, I have a lot of team around me of people who can help.

2002: Arahina Community House

Beginnings

The Arahina Community House initiative grew out of a need identified by the local Multi-disciplinary Co-ordinating Group. A base was needed where some basic living skill programmes could be run. Prior to this programmes were being run from the Mosgiel Family Health Counselling Centre, but due to growing demands there was not enough space, so two of the groups with representation on the Multi-disciplinary team offered support. The Taieri Family Trust kindly offered us the use of a house that they were renting at the time from Housing New Zealand. They were our umbrella group until they disbanded. The Taieri Social Services Council took on this role. Having an umbrella group meant that we could begin applying for our own funding. The house we used was at 5 Spey Street, it was known as the “Number Five” project. There were some funds left after the Taieri Family Trust disbanded which they gave to the new “Number Five” project. As we became more established, and we had more demand for our courses, again we needed to look for more suitable premises to accommodate the growth. Housing New Zealand were very supportive of our project when we were looking for an alternative house, in fact they kept the house here in Perth Street for months while we were generating the necessary funding. “During the interim period between the “Number Five” project at Spey Street and the opening of the Arahina Community House, I had a social work student working with me at the time who became involved with the project which was a real asset.”

What triggered the change from the Taieri Social Services Council to bring Arahina out into its own right was that we had talked about becoming a trust. As the project grew the committee felt it had an identity of its own – also the role of the Taieri Social Service Council had lessened over the years and were seeking more assistance from a local lawyers who was on the trust.

Before we move on I want to explain about the Multi-disciplinary Co-ordinating Group. The group was set up 23 years ago in response to a need for a more structured organisation to bring the many professional bodies working in the area together. The group consists of Plunket staff, Public Health Nurses, Doctors, and Social Workers, who continue to meet today on a fortnightly basis.

We also had the support of Peter Walker from the Community Law Centre in setting up the trust, which was very helpful. The setting up of the trust was important for our future, as it can be difficult in the long term accessing funding when you are under the umbrella of another group. It can be interpreted that you are not organised enough to set up the organisation in its own right.

The Arahina House as we know it now began here at number 5 Perth Street in 1993. The house was rented then from Housing New Zealand, and now from Community Housing. The facility is really good. There is a granny flat out the back that we use for a crèche, so we have somewhere for the children to go while the parents are attending the courses, and we are able to offer the crèche facility free of charge. How did you go about getting

approval for a crèche? We did not have to meet any criteria because the children were not going to be there for more than two hours at a time, and because it is a granny flat and self contained it does have all facilities to accommodate large numbers.

Funding

Finance to run the house came from a lottery grant, but accessing ongoing funding was challenging. In the early days even though our overheads were low, our funding was erratic and we were still establishing the community funding sources, living from month to month, resulting in uncertainty of the courses offered and no job security.“ As the co-ordinator I was fortunate not to be in a position were I reliant on this position for my total income which took some of the pressure off. It was difficult working for a Trust at times, so I did not need personal financial stresses as well.”

Over time we became more aware of the funding providers that best suited our project and what they wanted to read in the applications. We have got to the stage were we invite representatives from funding bodies to visit us and see what goes on. This has been beneficial, as it is sometimes difficult to communicate the essence of what you are doing on paper. The funder also get a feeling of how passionate you are about what you are doing, we invite the clients to write letters about their experiences as been useful as well. The paper need not be fancy and the spelling and grammar one hundred percent correct, it is the content that appeals.

It has become apparent that it is easier to get money when you already have some, and to keep your accounts in good order. Over time we established a data base of funding providers and their criteria, this has been helpful as the criteria varies, for instance some funding bodies would only give money if you had fifty percent of the funds to begin with. Our connections with Jenny Aimers from the Community and Recreation Services Department at Dunedin City Council had a huge impact on our ability to get where we are today, her knowledge and support was much appreciated.

I just recall, that pleading letter to the Rotary Club for money to cover our first ever cooking class, they understood the benefit of what we were aiming to do and were keen to support us. The Rotary Club has been on board in one way or another ever since then. They helped us a lot to keep the place.

Part of our promotions for the house is to go out and give talks to women’s community groups, as a way of raising our profile; as a result the community groups have often supplied us with materials for your courses.

Staffing

The house was staffed initially by people accessed though the Task Force Green Scheme. In time we were able to fund a co-ordinator. It was a challenging time being the co-ordinator as I virtually had two groups to be accountable to, the Multi-disciplinary group and the Taieri Social Services Council, each having different expectations of how I would work. For this to work it was important that each group had an understanding of their

role and that I knew who discuss things with along the way, and that I was honest and up front in my communication to both groups. In the early days it was a challenge when the co-ordinator got sick and was the only person there to run the courses and after school programmes, this situation changed once we were able to get more people on board.

I had a teaching background, which was helpful for the setting up and running of the courses, although some social work experience would have been useful when it came to networking and finding the most suitable people to be involved in helping to run the house. We have been lucky to have had some people from the Task Force Green Scheme on more than one occasion with the help of some funding from the Community Trust, which was a great help to us and we have appreciated their work commitment.

When we moved into Perth Street I had not even sat in the chair in my office before one of the neighbours was on the phone. She was anxious about what was going to be happening here because she saw a group of people looking at the house and realised that it was not a family. The neighbour told me that a family with nine children had been living in the house previously, and there were knotted blankets hanging out the window. Her main concern was that we would not put net curtain ups. She was concerned about the character of the street.

About that time someone in a halfway house from Auckland had murdered someone in the street they lived in, so when the Perth Street residents saw us moving in they were anxious about their safety. We addressed this by sending out the letters to all the neighbours in the larger area inviting them along for morning tea to talk about what we were about and to assure them that there actually was not going to be people staying here overnight. Consequently one of the neighbours has become a very supportive he has been absolutely wonderful, cutting the hedges, spraying the weeds and keeping an emergency key. So that was a very successful exercise all round.

We continued to run cooking and parenting courses, which remain the core of the courses we run. Both of these courses vary in depending on the current need to those attending. The parenting course has minimal structure, which allows for a more client driven environment. I play with the children so that the parents get an idea of what they can do also; some parents have never learned how to play. Over the years we have expanded on what we offer and we find the courses requested by those attending other courses at the house tend to have a greater attendance. I think it is important though to mention when running a new course and it does not work out the way you had hoped, try it a second time because I believe with most courses, it is through word of mouth not your advertising as much that people are attracted. So even if you get one or two people to it they will probably get other people to the next one. I think we learnt that right at the beginning when we tried to run a young mothers group and had virtually no-body to start with and then we kept one or two and now we get about ten or twelve people along? Again it is always hard to get the funding to run a course a second time when your funding is based on the numbers attending.

We tend to run the courses ourselves, as we have people on the team with the required skills to do so. This is a great advantage as it becomes a little more complicated getting an independent tutor in as you need to ensure that the tutor not only has the skills but also is able to meet the needs of the course participants. We found that when we had an independent tutor we were more conscious of the number of people attending the course, opposed to when we were running the courses ourselves.

We operate 'After School Programmes' everyday from the house and have up to sixty children in a week. The local food bank donates bread to us, which the children usually eat as toast and last year we were donated some fruit which we made into jam to go on the toast. We are very appreciative of all the donations to the house. We have two staff for fifteen children, being our limit when transporting the children, and because a lot of the children have special needs, then fifteen children are a good number to have especially when our activities are based at the house. We have the use of the community van from Taieri Social Services to transport the children when we go out on outings. We are part of the Out of School Care, which is a New Zealand network, and can be accessed through the community-funding agency. We run our after school programmes in a way that there is one activity each day for the children to participate in. We find this works better than having a range of activities and get to play and work with and alongside each other, which is useful for their learning.

We have been incredibly lucky with our staff, Angela, Glenda, here and John Williams. Their enthusiasm and commitment has enabled the community house to be what it is today, and that is why I think when people come for an interview they sense the enthusiasm and dedication that is present. I think we also have quite a supportive committee.

Enough though we are our programmes are directed mostly to women and children, we like to have some male input on the Trust. Our treasurer is very efficient which is much appreciated, as I have spent so many years here myself struggling to manage the finances, and the computer system is a great asset, which Glenda has set up. I think what really makes good teamwork is the way we compliment each other, which is supported by honest communication.

The paperwork has grown such a lot, which is a shame for a lot of small organisations. I am not saying you do not have to be accountable, but it has grown to the extent that you really have to have somebody who is able to do it well, otherwise you can get into a lot of strife. So much of the funding is based on actual figures and measurable outcomes. When it comes to running a course for example you need to ensure that all your costs are built into the amount you are applying for including power, telephone administration. We are fortunate to have Glenda who is our administrator and runs some of the after school programmes.

I think it is paramount for organisations to help each other, especially when they are getting established. Every organisation has so much in common with each other even though what we provide may differ. I think that the lack of contact with other groups is

one of the hardest things for a community group. Angela went to Auckland to the Conference on 'Out of School Care' programmes, which was interesting. She discovered that we are really unique in what we do here, as there is virtually no "Out of School Care" for the children that target low-income families except for the odd church group.

Successes

One of our successes would be the fundraising activities. We are not concerned about how much money we earn from the activities as there are other spin offs that come from the activities. The funding bodies always look with favour when they see an organisation attempting to raise some money themselves. The other spin off came from a fashion parade, where the clients here made the bulk of the garments and the clients modelled the garments. The fashion parade was supported by a couple of local shops also. This was an excellent fundraiser as not only did we raise some money, the clients also had an opportunity to feel proud about what they had achieved, a rare experience for many of the clients, which they continue to talk about today. Again this activity drew people from the community who may not have known much about the Arahina Community House.

One year we together a recipe book of all the recipes we had had in our budget cooking class and we are still selling those. The good old cheese roll making and raffles selling is always a good stand by. We sell some of our craft items on stalls in Mosgiel and we have had some items for sale in a local shop.

A fundraising activity we do which involves the children who come to the after school programmes is selling walnuts, the children get to use the money to buy ice creams when we are on an outings. We have the walnuts donated, and the children shell them. It is good for them to learn that they are contributing in some way. I love to see children who come to the after school programme grow and become more confident in what they do. Some children have come over the years for four days a week, so you get to see the changes, which is very exciting.

The demand for our holiday programmes is absolutely amazing. We are already booked out well in advance which is good but on the other hand we are not meeting the demand either which we can not actually address that at this stage.

We have clients come along the craft courses prior to Christmas and make presents. It is a great thrill for everyone when gifts are made to give away. They gifts do not need to be elaborate, but something quite simple. Some of the clients have been making children's clothing from bits a pieces we have at the house, yet very fashionable, a great sense of achievement for the client. It is a way of taking some of the Christmas stress off for people when they are struggling financially. Stability, continuity and security are things we try to provide which makes the house a safe place for people to be, for some clients it is the only place they experience any of these concepts.

2008: Arahina House Trust

Consolidating and developing practice

Things have remained the same as far as delivering the skills based programmes, we still do that and we still do the after school programme and we still do a holiday programme. However, the content of how we deliver that has changed, it's definitely client driven. On a Monday we do a mothers' group and that seems to be a group of women who started off here 10 years ago, 9-10 years ago when their babies were little, and they've sort of evolved with Arahina, they now come on a Monday morning. Next year I'm changing the focus of that and it will be a mothers' coffee group; in the crèche at the same time I'm going to run a mothers' group for mothers and babies, and I will get guest speakers to come in like Plunket, Child Youth and Family. I need to get Child Youth and Family (CYF) to come in and talk and explain about who they are and what they are about, how they can be accessed etc. to take the stigma away from Child Youth and Family for clients, so they can work in partnership with Child Youth and Family. At the moment they seem to think that if CYF are involved it's a bad thing, that you're going to get your children taken away and that's not the case. They need to learn to work in partnership and they need to be told that it's ok to do that; especially now with the response from the violence campaign that they've been doing.

On a Tuesday we do our 'Fun With Food on a Budget'. We would normally only do 5 weeks in the term, but we did do 2 terms of 10 weeks, however we can't get the funding for it, the demand is there but the money's not there. I think they've reduced the pot. Like they get a certain amount of funding but they have more people that they have to spend that funding. So therefore we can't increase the funding to cover the extra 5 classes, and it's a real nuisance, so now I have to look elsewhere. The difficulty with that is with Adult Community Education - you deliver the programmes, then you invoice them; and that's so awkward when we're doing our funding planning. So we can now only rely on those 5 weeks of funding. Then I will apply elsewhere because there is definitely a need. That's one of our biggest courses, we have a huge amount of people that come, they're not always the regular people, sometimes people might come only 2 times over the whole term, but we do have the regulars that come each week. So, I do need to get the funding because that's really important now, because we do focus especially on the obesity, we make allowances for people with health issues like diabetes, the cholesterol, any kind of health problems they have, they come along and say, and we have a look up in the book - especially children now that are presenting Coeliac disease, gluten intolerant.

The other thing that I've not really been aware of before that seems to be prevalent at the moment, is smaller children that are lactose intolerant. I've not noticed on our forms, that children have been diagnosed with that, and when they come in I say to them, "have they had a clinical diagnosis?", because quite often parents will hear another child down the road has been diagnosed as being lactose intolerant, and their child might have a little bit of eczema so they've automatically assumed, or if their child's had a tummy bug they might assume that they're gluten intolerant. So I always try to make it clear and I always ask them when they are filling out the form, is this a medical diagnosis or has this been - for our records anyway, and possibly for the children as well. So one of our cooking

things, and it spins off into our after school programme as well, a lot of the stuff that we do in the morning we try to keep a little bit left over so that children in the after school programme get a taste. Quite often they'll go home with the recipes; we will adapt it for them, because if there's lots of spicy stuff and stuff like – in Christmas truffles, we alternate the brandy and stuff that go with it the kids will go, “yes, I'd love this, this has got brandy in it”, and we go, “well actually *no*, but what you could be using is, you could be using like apricot nectar”, something really, that's really special and only for this time of the year.

Our Wednesday's we were having craft. There were 1 and 2 people arriving. So therefore I thought, this is not viable to have staff employed to do this. So I asked the clients, what do you want? They wanted to do some swimming, so we now call it an aqua therapy programme. We were going up to Moana Pool. Now that was not funded specifically for that so we had to take little pieces of money out, left over from other little pockets, sort of rob Peter to pay Paul if you like. That's quite successful, we have a regular group of 7 people. The 7 people fluctuate because we had one lady that had a double knee replacement, another lady had a single knee, one lady had a hip, somebody else had gout, and so it fluctuated but the group of 7 have been pretty staid [sic] in the fact that, that's what they want to do, the aqua therapy. So we were going to Moana Pool, we were doing the aqua jogging. Then it got quite cold, so we approached Mosgiel pool; so now a group of us go along, and it's quite nice, because we have a structured programme on the Wednesday, where we take them and we all sort out what we've done for the week, what we want to do, what our goals are; the rest of the time they pop along if they feel like going for a swim, it's just lovely that they do that. However in the winter the pool closes down, which is *really* unfortunate because they would swim throughout the winter, well they did when we went to Moana Pool, but with time constraints, going to Moana Pool was quite expensive because I'd collect them in the van - we would pay for them to go - whereas at Mosgiel Pool it's \$2.70, because they all have community services cards so they pay the \$2.00 and we subsidise the 70c.

Thursday we have our sewing group. I have a tutor that comes in, she's a volunteer, and she's a qualified seamstress, and she's been teaching the clients to draft a pattern. They can bring a pattern and the tutor will show them how to adapt that pattern to fit them, each individual person, so that it's a good tailored fit. We talk a lot about fabrics and the appropriateness of the fabric to the pattern, like stretch, grades and stuff like that, how to match diagonals, hexagonals, whatever, in relation to the size of the woman and what accentuates your size. We refer back a lot to Trinny and Suzannah books. One lady made a pair of togs like the dress togs with the overskirt, it was huge –it was a *huge* project to do, and she was just so proud, we were taking photos. Other ladies have made jackets, lined jackets; that's a big project for somebody to take. We spent a lot of time on - as people's weight fluctuated - on altering garments. We do a lot of soft furnishings, like anything that's left over if they've finished an article and they're running out of time before the end of the term we bring some ideas to them and they might like to make some fancy cushions that they would never make, that they can put towards gifts. Some of them towards the end of this term were making Christmas gifts, little round cushions with little bows, and you just tied a little \$2 gift to each bow, so it was very creative, and they

were creative amongst themselves and it's quite a collaborative group, new people come on and they welcome them, and I think they overwhelm them sometimes, but it's a very, very productive group and hopefully next year if we can get some more room and some more funding, we do do that for 10 weeks, because the need is there and we do get funded for that, so that's quite good.

Developing a community centre

Some people came and approached me and said we need a mental health support group out here. I said, I'm happy to help them start a group and we would be their umbrella, but the view would be that they would be a stand alone group. So that was how it developed. They now *are* a stand alone group. So they come and they meet out in the crèche building every Friday morning.

We open our crèche building for people to have meetings out there. Quite often FGC's are being held with our families out here and they won't travel into town. They have constraints with their transport and the money to get buses in and out, they just don't go, and that's not helpful. So we open the crèche building and we just – they offer a donation or a koha.

The clients seem more comfortable being able to use a building here than they do going into town, I think. They can actually come down the side of the building, because the crèche is quite independent of the house, so they don't need to come through here and let us know. We've had Strengthening Families meetings, we've had family group conferences, the Roxburgh Health Camp come down and utilise the building, they use that for their family meetings; we've had professional meetings out there, we've had other family meetings where they haven't wanted to be seen going into school, into the principal's office, it just takes the stigma away I think. We've had people from Work and Income come out and see clients there because clients refuse to go into Work and Income, so it's just such a valuable resource; and hopefully if I can get some funding, I need to be able to have it like a multi function building which it sort of is at the moment but we do have too many toys.

Developing work with children

In the afternoons we still run our after school programme. We have a van - the van was gifted to us by Taieri Social Services, which is just lovely, and we house that just behind a local garage, they house that for us and in turn for housing that for us they get to do all the warrants and the repairs and the maintenance, and that works out really well because we don't have any place here to store it. We collect children from Silverstream, Elm Grove, East Taieri; and Christian Armana. With our after school programmes we've focused a lot on social skills, communication skills, personal care and nutrition in general. So because of my background in behaviour we work a lot on group work. If somebody has an issue, it's really helpful for that child especially if something has happened at school, they will come to me and say, "I need some talk time", so we have something to eat and something to drink and –then we'll have the talk time and it's usually generated by the children. So they stand up and they say, "good afternoon girls and boys, I have an issue", or "I have a problem", or "I would like to discuss something",

which is just lovely because it is giving them that power, and they will tell us what's happened, and it's usually somebody has hit them at school or somebody has hurt their feelings and the other children will contribute and offer, sometimes inappropriately, their advice, and maybe safe people that they can go to within the school. It's just wonderful, it's so empowering to the kids because it takes away that victim mode, because they're in control, they can choose to be the victim and be sad and be unhappy or they can choose to think, maybe, I wonder why that person did that, or whatever. So we work a lot on behaviour intervention.

We work a lot on family violence, some of the stories the children have for news are horrific, some of the things that have happened in those families over the weekend are *just* dreadful. When they share that sometimes I do have to stop them because of the content and then I will bring them down to the office and I'll ask them how they're feeling about it and do they want to discuss anything else. Before I do that I always say to them, "you know that my job says that if it's something that could affect your health or your safety then I have to let my boss know", - my boss being Child Youth and Family. So the children are well aware of that, I've explained that to the parents as well, that I am mandated by Child Youth and Family. And they're great, you know - they will tell me some stuff, I document it, we have a file on each child, you know, some of the poverty out there is just horrendous. It's like you know, why were you stealing lunches at school, and I will ring up the school and say to the school, "look I understand there's been a problem, and I wonder if you can tell me when he's been stealing lunches, has he been eating them or is he just stealing them and throwing them away?" Because it's important what he's doing; and if he's stealing them to eat them it might well be that he's hungry, and if he's hungry, why is he not being fed at home, so you need to analyse - like, there's always the ABC, the anti (*unclear*), the behaviour, the consequence. We work a lot on that here - it's quite interesting - sometimes the children will mirror our so-called role models and to look at them and hear them, and you know, they use your same expression, the hand on the hip, it's just awesome that they feel comfortable, they have that power, they have that control over themselves. It works well here, we have 48 children through here a week, and I don't have any problems with those children. In fact what we've done is we've asked Child Youth and Family to come in and assess the children that they have, *here*, in this environment, which they've done. One family they came in and it was three boys and they asked the boys, you know, "how come you behave here?" and of course they go "Oh, I don't know", and he said, "well what is it about Arahina, what is it here, why are you not naughty here", and one of them turned around and said, "well, she likes us", and I thought, how simple is that? "Do you think the teachers at school like you?" "No"; "Why do you think they don't like you?" "Because I'm naughty". So it's quite simple and basic with some of their behaviours.

You know, I often wonder if people do ask children how they are feeling and why. So we do a lot of group work, and that's my fortè, I just enjoy the children so much. We travel out - I spend a lot of time out on the Taieri, I have a farm, I have horses, so we utilise the farm. We do a lot of first aid stuff when we're out in the bush, what's the correct thing to do. We do safety plans for all our children - if there's violence in the home, who are the safe people that they can go visit, what's the appropriate thing to do, you know, with

some of our violent families the children actually have their own plans, and that's really important because they need to have a safe person that they can go to.

I ordered 50 of this "Family Violence Are You OK?" – I sent these home with the children. These are for adults really but we worked through these with the children. I've got other brochures that I sent home with them and I always explain to the children what this is about, because sometimes you can't reach the parents`. They as children have lived in that environment so they've seen that and they think that's ok, well it's actually not ok, it's not ok to be hit, and to be yelled at, and to be, you know, have food used as a reward and a punishment. So when I'm sending something like this home I always explain what it is to the children and that's when the stories arrive, and that's when you collect the data.

We're very lucky here at Arahina because we get a lot of stuff donated; we get bedding, we get cutlery, we get children's clothes, we don't get food but pretty much everything else, toys, bits and pieces. Some really at risk families we have supported with the donations that we've got here. Yesterday I had a major clean out and I rang the Women's Refuge and they came and collected the bedding and the clothes and the soft toys, there were shoes, there was even dress-ups, filled a carload, so it's really good that what the community delivers to us our clients get first pick and then it goes to Women's Refuge, some of it goes to Taieri Christian Care Foodbank here and some of it goes to the Salvation Army, just depending on how busy and that.

Opening the doors and making linkages

When I first started here all we did was the skills based courses plus the after school programme, that was it. Now, we have an open door policy. We have a lot of people coming in off the street, it's more like a family support centre now, word is finally getting out there that Arahina *is* a place where you can go and you can ask for help. Probably 70% of my job now would be referring, to other agencies. We get a lot of people that come in with issues regarding Work and Income, and that's because most of them are illiterate, and the forms they get are just so overwhelming they don't read them, they put them in the drawer, and then their benefit gets cut off and then it's panic and they come to me and I say, "You need to go back home and get all the information that they've sent you and bring it back here and we'll have a look". I need to refer them back to Work and Income because Work and Income employ people specifically to do that with them, to go through and help them and be an advocate for them. Our clients won't go because they've been there, they've usually abused somebody there, and they won't go back. That takes an awful lot of our time.

We do help clients with CVs, we help them with research for jobs, we role model here an interview so that they know how to conduct themselves, and what to wear. So we do a lot of that, we do a lot of self-esteem building. People come in with queries about Child Youth and Family, so we explain and we give them data and brochures and stuff like that. People come in with mental health issues and we refer them to the appropriate place, and we always do a follow up because often enough people with health issues won't go to the doctor because they owe the doctor money. One of the other big issues that we do see

here are clients who don't have their own vehicles will not travel into town because I think it's \$8; 2 buses, and that \$8 is half a phone card for a week and they only get - I think they get 2 or 3 appointments at paediatrics and then that's it, they're off that list and they have to go back on that waiting list again. And that's one of the things that we really, really push with our clients it's really important to make sure that you get your child checked out they won't; so what we've been looking at is maybe could we get some of those health professionals to come out here to Mosgiel sometime so they had a point where they could go, so that these children could be seen.

We used to refer to Mosgiel Family Health Counselling Service, it's changed a lot now and a lot of the people that we do refer to them, unless they fit their criteria, they are passed on to the next place, and I think they refer to East Taieri Church; a lot of my clients I refer directly to East Taieri Church. It's called Turning Point and it's professional and affordable counselling. I don't even know if our clients pay, I think it's minimal. A lot of our clients when they come in and I say to them, "what is it that you want, if I could wave a magic wand what is it that you would like?" and a lot of them, it's education. They would like to go further and learn a bit about something else. So I have a good relationship with the East Taieri Church, and they say, "Right, what is it that you've targeted for your clients, what do your clients want, where's the need?" They created this programme up there called 'Connections' and most of our clients attended there which was just lovely.

I get lots of phone calls during the week from people who have trouble with their children that are teenagers; I always refer them up there. The stigma of the fact that it's a church, and I say to them, "you don't have to have a bible to attend there, you don't have to have a religious background, they're there to help your children unconditionally. Ring them, talk to them, if you still have a problem ring me back and I'll refer them to somewhere else", and I would refer them to like Mirror Counselling or Otago Youth Specialty or either one of the places in town. But I always try to go out there first because at least if I know I'm referring to East Taieri I know that they can get there, because they can walk there.

We do budgeting as a component of all of our programmes as well as clients will come in off the street. We have people that come in and say, "Oh, I don't really want to work any more", and it's like "Ok, these are the alternatives. If you choose to leave your job this is what will happen. You won't be able to apply for a benefit for this amount of time and this is how your children will be affected, etc., etc., and if you're not happy in that job..." we advise them to stay in the job and look for something else while they're still working so that they don't have that stand-down period and that they are not stressed financially. And of course all the children's issues that we get which is everything, absolutely everything.

New challenges

I think when you analyse why they are suffering that poverty it is because they have huge, huge debts, they don't – and it all comes back to education – they've never been taught how to budget. They go and buy their food for the week from the grocery store,

but they haven't had a menu to base what they're buying on, so even though they've spent, you know, \$200 on food, they say they have no food in the house because they haven't bought the food that they need to feed their children. They may have bought unnecessary stuff, you know; there would always be a phone card. Most of our clients are in debt because they've bought phones on Telecom, their land lines have been cut off but they all have cell phones. The other thing, the big thing I see here that causes a lot of debt with our families is appliance rental companies. They're paying the rental as well as the rent to buy. And it's just so easy. Lots of my high school children have EFTPOS cards; parents will put the \$20 or whatever in there a week and they have to buy their food out of that. So they go and buy it on the first 2 or 3 days and then they are not eating for the rest of the week so therefore they either steal or they borrow, or they get themselves into debt with their fellow peers. I think as a social service provider, and I take responsibility for this as well, and this has really made me aware – we've spent a few weeks sort of analysing how we're going to plan for next year, and what is it we really need to do, what is the community saying to us, where is the biggest need? The biggest need is education again.

A lot of our clients will go to a meeting and we as professionals say, you need to give your family this amount of nutrition a week, and you need to make that sure they are dressed in their warm and all the rest of it, and you need to make sure they have a shower, but did anybody ever really teach them how to shower their babies or their children? And we talk to our kids and we've said to them, "when you go and have a shower what do you do? Right, pretend you're in the shower now." Half of them stand there, they wash their hair with shampoo because it smells nice, but they don't know how to actually wash. You know, like they've still got dirt around *here*, and they don't physically know how to put the soap on the facecloth or whatever, and most people use liquid soap from the \$2 shop because it's the cheapest soap you can get. One of our families was told by Plunket, these are the foods that you need to give your baby, and we went to visit this lady and she had a roast on and like 6 vegetables cooking, and it's, "gosh, are you expecting people in?" and she said "No, no, that's what I've got to feed my baby". Nobody told her that you only need to choose 2 of those vegetables. So she had the whole lot. It's like basic grassroots teaching. You need to have a budget and then you say to a client, "What's a budget?" - "oh I don't know, something to do with money". They don't know. And they don't know what they don't know. And we assume they know. And it's wrong. We have to go to that next tier down, well I believe anyway.

I am going to make sure that when we have our meetings with other professionals for our families, that when things are suggested that I take it that step further and I go down below that level and make sure that the client and the family actually understand what it *is* that we are asking of them.

The other thing was the washing. This lady, you could not get in her wash-house. She had floor to ceiling clothes. She said, "oh yes, I haven't had time to wash." So she goes to the clothing bins and they steal them, or they get the \$1 grab a bag from the Sally Army, or people donate clothes, like us, and they wear them, but they don't wash them, because she doesn't have time to wash them. We said to her, "well look, maybe if you set one

day aside a week to wash, you have an alternative day 'cos if it rains," and she said, "oh, well, it's rained all week and I haven't done any washing, I won't do that." So what happens to all those clothes? They just put in a wheelie bin or a sack and get thrown out. It's just basic living skills, it's being in a routine and trying to get families to have a structure. But they don't. When I ask, how was it for them when they were growing up, it was terrible. So I think that's the one important thing that we have learned just recently, because I think, this would be the first time – this is the first year that we've actually gone out and we've had a good look around the community and asked people. I go to talk to groups like women's groups and I've talked to Rotary and I say to them, look, I'm not asking you for money; all I'm asking you to do is look at the families in your street. In the winter when children should be inside, the lights should be on, Mum and Dad should be home, or whoever's home; are they? Or are they still out playing on the street. Just look around and see what you can do, right on your back door step. It has an impact when I am talking to them, because it's shock, horror; and it's really difficult to follow that up. So I don't know.

Working with other agencies

The first Tuesday of every month we have a Taieri Support Network meeting. That involves all of the social service providers that deliver a service to clients in the Taieri. They come from town, they come from all over the place. We have a huge database of people. They don't all come to the same meeting and each person, as a new person comes on board, we will get them to come as a guest speaker and it's the most amazing form of networking, and you know – they say to me, "ok, what's going on in the Taieri at the moment? Where are the target areas, what's happening?" and quite often it's like Work and Income and the counselling services are complementary to what I'm saying. I'm saying, "look, we've got an increase in clients coming in and then after Christmas we get all the clients coming in and saying, "look, I don't have any money, I've got all these accounts coming in for all the stuff that we bought over Christmas", so I will discuss and talk about that at the meeting saying I'm needing to refer them to different budget advice which is Presbyterian Support, Corpac Trust and Dunedin Budget Advice Service. And they're saying the same thing, they're saying they're getting a lot more clients coming to Work and Income saying that they need more money. So it's an excellent forum for networking and it's great for me because I learn all the different services that are out there, what they do, who to contact, so that I've got somebody to refer my clients to. It works really well and my key focus really, I do have to admit, is to try and get those people to come out and deliver that service out there; and I really promote the crèche and I promote Arahina and say, "we have this wonderful resource here, is it possible for you to come out and deliver this service out here?" and they do.

At Christmas, I do have to say, it's been quite humbling, I have had gifts from families who cannot even afford to put food on their table. And they have bought me gifts, and it's like – "that's so, you didn't have to" – "no, but I wanted to" - and you have to think well, that's just so lovely. It is, it is, and people say, "well, how do you know what you're doing is working?" The clients come back and the clients want to be part of it and they're quite protective of Arahina. I've got some phone calls to make this afternoon, I'm going to ring Child Youth and Family and I'm going to ring the supervisors of the 3

case workers I've worked with, just to say 'thank you', and to let those case workers know the difference in those families' lives. Because – who does that?

Funding challenges

When I came on board they were delivering the skills based courses and the after school programme. It was my job to let the trustees know that *now*, because we had contracts with MSD, FACS and CYFs, they required us to deliver *specific* programmes in the *specific* way and that we were accountable for that. There was a little bit of resistance from the trustees because historically they had always done it this way. And it was really – they were quite resistant to that government focus of making us change to fit them, when really we were about the community, and it was actually quite – it was really interesting for me because I'm sort of in the middle, I've got the community on one end saying, "we want this, we need this, we want you to deliver this", then I've got the government funding agencies saying, "we will give this money but you have to do it this way", and it's trying to make it fit, so you do make it fit, you deliver what the government agencies tell you because that's what you're paid and mandated to do, but once you've done that you sort of also branch out, now that's unpaid, you only get paid for the sort of like the nucleus of it, and the ripple effect you do yourself.

This last year we've actually been documenting every person that comes through the door and assigning them a task that we've helped with, which has shown our trustees that Arahina has now evolved to the needs of the *client* rather than the needs of what the funding was originally for. So we were funded to do 5 skills based courses in the morning and 4 after school programmes. Now, it's extended so even though we still only have that money, we can just stretch that money out to cover. With funding, you just about need a full time funding adviser. Funding is such a huge issue for us. We make do with less, we really do, we stretch everything out to the last. You know, I have wonderful staff who put a lot of extra time, a lot of their own resources in, and they do it because of their passion and Arahina couldn't function if it wasn't for that.

As far as our funding goes, we get funded for the after school programme *only*, from Child Youth and Family, whereas prior to that Child Youth and Family used to fund all children. Having said that, Child Youth and Family fund *only* the Child Youth and Family children, so we get funded for 30 children and we have 48. Family and Community Services pick up the remainder. In terms of what we deliver to those CYFs children, they are happy with what we are doing, as far as the accountability, it's a huge amount of paperwork; and the paper work is just becoming overbearing to be honest. They send us a contract out, we have to send our accountability back and proof of what we do etc. Family and Community Services which is new, you know, it's new for us because our funding has been divided now for the 30 children, they don't fund the after school programme any more either. So they only fund 30 children on the after school programme, whereas Family and Community Service pick up the rest, so we get a little pocket of money for doing our budget advice, for information sharing and the budget advice is actually a component of all of our programmes where we are teaching them the value of food and how to go and buy the specials, and the same with our sewing and mothers' group and all the other bits and pieces. The rest of the funding we get funding

from COGS, we get funding from Lottery; we've been very successful at having funding from Community Trust of Otago. Community Trust of Otago has saved our butt. They picked up the slack. We wouldn't have been able to do that extra work and have those people coming in off the street if we hadn't got that funding from Community Trust of Otago. I have to praise them because they came and they visited and I talked with Carol and she said, "well, what is it that you are doing now?" we *are* all things to all people, we're not supposed to be, we are the only facility out here in Mosgiel that offers unconditionally – support.

We were funded by United Way but we only get 3 bites of that cherry and we've had those 3, so that's out for this year. Taieri Community Arts Council, we get some money from them to help with our after school; ACE - Adult Community Education – which is attached to Taieri College, that does our sewing last year, now I've applied for those 5 weeks for our cooking for this year because I felt it might be easier to get the funding from the sewing group than somewhere else. DCC Community Grants Scheme – we got funding from them; and then we go to all the smaller – you know like Pub Charities and there's the Kings (?) Charitable Trust; Rotary of course; Fisher and Paykel gave us a dishwasher – double drawer dish washer which was wonderful; the Mosgiel Friday Club, they do a round every now and then and donate a lot of knitting patterns and haberdashery and stuff like that. Friends and neighbours group, they give us whatever they can, one lady actually gave us *money* – cash – which I spent on the holiday programme over Christmas last year and all the children wrote her a letter and we took photos and sent it back to her which was the result of me actually going and talking to them. We have applied to Bendigo Valley, Southern Victorian Charitable Trust and we've just set up a new relationship with Olympic Gym in Mosgiel; he has gone round and targeted all the businesses in Mosgiel and asked for a gift for the children, and he's putting on a Christmas party on the 23rd of December for them.

So we're building a relationship with him at the moment whereby I'm thinking well, ok, swimming and assessment - maybe my ladies could go to the gym. Would he be prepared to do an individual programme with each of our clients to help them get motivated, and he said that he would be more than happy to do that, so it's like, it's another connection, which is great.

I'm quite fearful of the funding. It just runs my life to be honest; it's there the whole time. Next year we want to run 2 more programmes; I can't commit until I *know* that I have that funding. One is the mothers' group for the young mothers and babies out there, and the other is our craft group as well as the swimming. So I *need* to get the funding for that. The other thing that clients have asked is that we do, like, a *sharing* – they have a time that they can come in – it would be in an evening – where they can come and they can just have down time where I would get guest speakers. The clients would tell me what they wanted, like they want someone to come out and talk about Aspergers' Syndrome. They've got a list of stuff. And I *will* do that. I was thinking maybe if I just did it one evening each term, we could probably wear that, without having to apply for funding. And then whatever was the spin off from that I would apply. With the funding I

get so frustrated – there was some – we have funding from – the only government funding we have is from FACS, MSD.

I feel hard done by I have to say, because we do a lot of preventative work here. We are keeping a lot of clients out of the system, by referring them to different places and helping them and upskilling them, helping them to get back in the workforce and off the benefits, and we get little back for it. I think Arahina could deliver a lot more and *better*, if we had funding. We don't have enough funding to cover our staff as it is now. Not very many places will cover tutor wages or coordinator wages, it's like COGS and Lottery are the only 2 that really fund that.

I do have a bit of a sore spot when it comes to government funding because we – most of our clients, some way, have health issues; we have no money from health. The people that I've spoken too have said, "oh no, there's no money in health", you know – well ok, with mental health that's fair enough because we have good places we can refer to. But we work a lot with our clients and *get* them to go to the doctors and *get* them to go to the paediatricians and other health professionals. We, as far as I am concerned, we do do a lot of preventative stuff and we can't hook into the funding for it, so somebody else has to wear that. And Child Youth and Family's money has not changed but the volume of clients that we're delivering to has decreased. With Family and Community Services I'm going to have a meeting, there's a new funding advisor coming on board next year and I'm going to actually see if I can get the funding advisor to come out and discuss with us *exactly* what it is we're doing and how that we've evolved from the needs of the community *now*, rather than what *they see* as what we deliver. You know, they have their idea of what they think we're delivering. But it changes, and we need to have money to cover that.

I think the government need to come here to Arahina and see what's happening at – if they can't change it at this level, where are they going to make the changes? It's just like skimming the icing off the top, it's not going to work – they want to prevent family violence, they want to make every child have the right to have a nice, safe, supportive environment to grow, this is what we're about here. And they need to come and see what we do here and they need to fund us accordingly. It's interesting when I'm doing a funding application, I can write exactly what it is I think they want me to say but I need them to know more.

Our data for delivery of the programmes in the 2006 - 2007 year are: 1298 after school programmes; 47 crèche programmes and 76 holiday programmes so that we delivered a total of 1421 programmes. The data for the adult programmes, we had 367 mothers' group attendances so that was the different people that come through the door. We had 343 'Fun with Food on a Budget' attendances. Some of those people for that programme did attend more than once, but they still – we delivered those services to those people. We had 94 swimming attendances and 297 sewing. So was a total of 1101. Advice and support delivered outside of the organised programmes, and that was the new thing. We had 107 budgeted education clients, we had 11 CV preparation and assistance, we had 208 referrals to other agencies, we had 25 employment assistance, 201 general enquiries,

they're the ones we didn't fit into any of those other things; 88 Child Youth and Family collaborations, that was individuals and families; we had 43 Work and Income assistance and 79 form filling. I need to find a numeracy and a literacy programme that can be delivered out here. I need to get someone from town to come out here and deliver it out here in an evening. So - I think that's what it added up to – 4385 supports to individuals.

Governance and management

The structure of Arahina needs to be looked at, and we will do that because now a lot of my time is taken up on one to one with clients so I need to employ tutors. At the moment we are lucky because we get people that come in and just volunteer their time. But I think with the expertise that we are using from those volunteer people, we really need to pay them, because they are doing such a wonderful job, they need to be rewarded for that. So with our trust and our governance we're very fortunate, I think when I came on board I just ran and I don't think I allowed them (the Trustees) to keep up with me. And then all of a sudden now I've got these stats, they're just saying 'wow'. I think gone are the days when it was a small Arahina, the dollar values have increased like 200% and I think that was a bit of a worry to start off with; and then all the contracts that come on board as well. But we have 2 trustees that are going to stand down at the end of the year and I think we have interest from 2 other people that are interested, professional people, in coming on board, which is the sort of going to take us into that next level I hope.

We have a wonderful network through Child Youth and Family, Ministry of Social Development, with Otago Chamber of Commerce and there's the Otago Collaborative Network Against Family Violence, and we've just joined the Social Service Providers of Aotearoa too anything that comes up as far as like training and stuff like that go, I went to the Polytech - and did the 'Governance in Not for Profit Organisations', when I started because I didn't understand the difference between management and governance. I thought that management and governance were just the labels, but now I have very clear boundaries on where I work in, and how I work. At that stage because the trust was run differently, it was sort of overlapping, the governance and the management was overlapping, whereas now it's been good because it's very clear.

2002: Fernhill¹ Community Group

Council Connections

Jenny Aimers at the Community and Recreation Services department, from the Dunedin City Council in 1996 instigated the idea of a community group. A survey of the triangular was undertaken to help identify the make up of the area. As a result core groups were invited to a meet with her, and other advisers. Little pockets of meetings were held all round the triangular area and then gradually those groups were brought together until one day we had a public meeting and formed the Fernhill Community Group Incorporated.

We think this particular area was chosen because of the transient population we have got here, also there are a lot of halfway houses here, and the area was looking a little bit run down in some parts. There was a neighbourhood support group running, but it did not appear to be as effective as it could have been. Another issue we wanted to address was how we could have more control over who came to live in the area, so that we could improve the area socially. Jenny Aimers and the Community and Recreation services at the Dunedin City Council became our advisors on funding and council contacts once the initial group had been established.

There were projects being carried out in the area independent of the community group. One of the projects was to do with the water run off from the town belt and the Zingari Richmond Football Club, which was affecting properties in the area, retaining walls on three properties in the area. The other project involved the planting of native trees in the area to replace the sycamore trees felled by the Dunedin City Council. It was at that point that someone from the Dunedin City Council suggested that the person leading these projects join the community group so that they could have access to funding through the council.

The areas that have been landscaped, and replanted in natives include the town belt and the area down by the Southern Cemetery, and Rhododendrons have been planted on a city property near the Citibus Depot in Princes Street. We have planted six thousand trees and almost two thousand bush lilies and ferns that we have acquired from available sources. Now one or two of the neighbours are involved in maintaining sections of the project.

The Council contractors had to pay someone to dispose of the leaf mould and wood chips from wind damaged trees around the town. Now they deliver them to an area we have available, and now we use it for tracks and compost and mulch. People in the community are asked to donate any native seedling they have in their own gardens to Jim for the project. This is an ongoing process that has proved to be successful.

¹ *The Fernhill Community Group operates within the geographical boundaries Maitland Street down MacLaggan Street to Princes Street finishing at the Oval. The area has never had a suburb name, but now appears as "Fernhill" on the Dunedin City Council web map.*

At the end of 1998 we applied to the City Council for a grant to purchase tools, resulting in a grant of \$2500.00. Some of that was used for administration, but the bulk of it was used for the purchase of tools, some of which we lent to the Malcam Trust for use the tools on other council projects as well.

For a time we had the Conservation Corp from the Malcam Trust coming, as part of their course for six days a year to help us clear the ground and plant trees. We also had assistance from Taskforce Green workers through the Dunedin City Council.

For two years in a row, staff at the Dunedin City Council arranged for five hundred dollars worth of tree species that were difficult to acquire, which was an added bonus. We had access to native trees and plants through the council to areas being logged, before they were destroyed by the logging operations.

Another project that we have been involved in is the section at the corner of Manor Place and Melville Street. We rang up “City Property” and said “we can get rhododendrons donated and would you like us to plant them there.” We contacted the Malcam Trust who planted them, and now we are in responsible for that section also.

Starting out

Initially we had a city councillor chair the meeting until we were in a position to begin calling for interest in positions on the committee. The lady who offered to be secretary asked another person if they would take the chair position and they agreed.

In order to change the leadership later, there was some lobbying outside the group meetings and a person from outside the group was nominated as chairperson. As a result, some people who had left the group because of the leadership, returned once the issues had been resolved with the projects still operating the vision of the group was still apparent.

Once our new chairperson became established the group was able to be clearer about it’s role and future vision. We became more efficient with our funding applications, and it was about this time we became an incorporated body.

A challenge we faced was regarding the best time to have meetings, as night-time meetings do not suit a lot of people living alone who did not like coming out at night, and returning to an empty house. We then began to have a mid-winter afternoon festival or function on a Sunday that was slightly more successful, but we continue to struggle to get some people to attend meetings and functions.

Up until this year we met once a month with an attendance of around fifteen and twenty people, but a lot of people only came two or three times. This year we are trying out a different format where we have a big group meeting every second month with a speaker, and a committee meeting on the alternate months both in the evenings. The group makes suggestions for people to speak and the secretary arranges this. There are people that

working outside the committee supporting the committee members. We are trying to encourage some of the younger people to be involved, as a lot of the people who are on the committee or who have been on the committee are retired.

It was quite a challenge trying to identify the needs of the community and find ways to respond those needs. Our initial leadership was not very conducive to our efforts. In order for the group to move forward there needed a lot of discussion so that the group became clear about what they wanted to achieve and were aware of the level of commitment required.

When the Book Bus came to Carroll Street, we tried having coffee mornings, but this was not successful. Our aim was to have a daytime activity for the elderly folk who are reluctant to go out at night.

Focusing

Our main form of communication is through a newsletter that goes out every three months to about eleven hundred households throughout the area, and a group of six or seven people delivers these. We access a website called 'Better Together' as an educational resource when writing the newsletter.

It is important that we continue to be aware of our purpose in the area. We could easily become a social welfare group, which is not really our role. We prefer to be a referral group and if we find somebody's in trouble, which happens from time to time, we then ensure that some other agency helps them. We are basically being used as a liaison group for Police as well as Neighbourhood Support Group.

We feel that as a group we have gained recognition in the community through perseverance of achieving our aims, and that we have tried to be pro-active by doing things in the area. When we draw attention to a concern we know we now know we will be heard.

The people that are doing the newsletter deliveries in the area keep us posted when they see something not quite right that they can pass it on to one of the committee members for the appropriate agency to be contacted.

We now have a police liaison officer for the group that was appointed when the police officer and member who had been supporting the Fernhill Community Group, left. The police officer has been to several of our meetings to encourage people to phone the police if they have any concerns. We have police patrols that come through the area usually three times a night and this means that people in the area can feel more secure.

The chairperson has been made the Fernhill representative for the Safer Communities Council, out of which has come the new Neighbourhood Support Co-ordinator. We also are represented on the Princes Street Working Party to try and improve Princes Street.

The main aim is for the working party to ensure at the Fernhill area is included in the project because what they do on Princes Street affects us.

When we see a house for sale we have a letter to give to the land agent outlining the people we hope will come into the area. We also have a 'Welcome to our Neighbourhood' letter that we have either a neighbour take to them, or we put it in their box. The letter contains information about contacts in the area, and when the rubbish collection days are. We would like to make a follow up phone call or a visit but we are not resourced enough yet to do that.

Currently we are working on the market reserve by establishing a playground for children in the area. Some of the funding for this has come from what was raised at the Gala Day in January. We ran a trolley derby for the children with a barbecue near the start line as another fundraiser. We are looking to having more garage sales and the barbecues. We have decided to keep the price at a dollar for the food to give better value and increase sales.

The Cedars of Lebanon Club asked us to combine with them on redisplaying the Shirakee, an expedition which Helen Frizzell produced for the oral history section of Presbyterian Support, about ten years ago. We have people who are available to help anyone in the community, for example the elderly who may have a problem on their section or with their house.

The Gala Day attracted a lot of interest in the community, for the first time we have filled every office on the committee. People became involved with the gala day who were not necessarily members of our group or paid up members, including people who lived out of Dunedin. Even though for some people the involvement was a one off, for others they were keen to be involved. This was quite a big turning point for the group. The City Council arranged for Taskforce Green to help us out on the day.

We had a Neighbourhood Support day that Wilma McCorkindale organised, with another fundraiser for the playground project.

Challenges

Funding applications, increasing membership resources and time and resources to undertake what we want to achieve is always a challenge.

Poverty is evident in this area as there are a number of families who are not very well off. Although we do not see ourselves as being a welfare agency, our focus incorporates social aspects of the area, and keeping up to date on the current issues. In the area there are several different cultural groups, including Pakistanis, Cambodians, Sri Lankans, Japanese, Chinese, Maori and Pacific Islanders. We go out of our way to say hello and now they have got to stage where they say hello to us and they feel welcome. We make a point of supporting the businesses they run. We are still trying to get more people to set

up their own Neighbourhood Support groups in their street, which can be supported, by the main area group.

We are looking at having a community notice board. The local dairy that is no longer operating would have been an ideal spot. The building is vacant and we have been wondering, if there is a way we can make use of it as a base for our group. It would be ideal for a coffee bar or something, opening only on certain days of the week, and not to be run at a profit.

Successes

As a group we have gained two 'Keep Dunedin Beautiful' beautification awards, and an award from the Neighbourhood Support Group.

Networking with the group is a high priority so when somebody leaves someone else can step into their shoes.

The survey that we were involved in at the beginning showed that in this small triangle there were twenty-two halfway houses. As a group we brought this to the attention of the Dunedin City Council, expressing concern that the number would not increase, now we have fewer halfway houses in the area.

The percentage of landlord owned properties has dropped quite a lot in the last six years, and we are hoping that young people and families will come and buy those houses and restore them to their original state. "The area is only 15 minutes walk from town and it's a great spot for young business couples."

2008: Fernhill Community Group

Lobbying for community amenities

Probably one of the more significant things (since 2003) was that we got the DCC to put speed humps in Maitland Street which has actually slowed down the traffic quite considerably and made the street probably a lot quieter. There's been some major accidents there, and cars just don't get that chance to get their speed up and come flying over any more, so it is quite good.

Then we added to the playground, we decided that it would be quite good to have picnic tables down there. When the Crown Flour Mill opened, a lot of the residents around here were quite curious about what it looked like, so we decided that maybe the Fernhill Community Group could go and have a look round, so we asked permission and then we said, "oh, there might be a few people, they said well why don't we have afternoon tea and use it as a fundraiser?" We thought if we got 50 people we would be really happy. Well, we had over 200 people. We had at least 7 tours, we had people actually ringing up on the day and we raised the money to put the first picnic table down there and then the Irish Lodge gave us enough money for the next one and the DCC came to the party through one of their grants so we had enough money to put a third one down there, which was really good.

We were talking about putting another picnic table down in the Market Reserve, but the DCC weren't keen because they didn't reckon that the ones that we had down there were being used, but I mean the weather hasn't been suitable for that. But we actually qualified for the re-funding of the playgrounds so we will get the money in the next round, which the DCC are talking about moving the seesaws over, extending the swings, and having two other sort of spinning type things, so we've sort of been caught up in the middle of it. They have come to us and we've also gone out to everybody in the community with a questionnaire as to what they want, this is what was proposed by the DCC and how did they feel about it, so it sort of feels a little bit more that we have some say in what actually happens in your community. Like everybody has had this chance now to say, "well, I like what's happening down at the Market Reserve", which is our main project; or "I don't like it", or "Why don't you do this". We put out 1000 and we really went out, in that we dropped them off at Chipmunks and the crèche round the corner and the hairdressers and the Shop on Carroll, and all those sort of places so that nobody could actually say they didn't get a chance to say what they wanted to do. (Someone from) the council rang the other day to say that a man had approached them to say that he thought it was absolutely *atrocious* to have a playground with no toilets; and how did we feel about that? And I said "well, I have had people voice that", and he said, "Could I put your name forward, we have a committee that wants to do it", and I said "Yes, I'm sure the Fernhill Community Group would be prepared to do a survey round the area about that, a couple of people did actually have that on their replies".

There is a funding round of public conveniences coming up again, so that might be something that - because even during the week there's nowhere down there to go for toilets, I mean when we had the trolley derby we ended up having to insist that the trolley

derby people hire a Portaloo, because we were having people wanting to use our toilet all the time.

Creating a sense of community

There's always the things that the community group does like the trolley derby - it's part of our focus in lots of ways, I mean those are the things that you can see in concrete, then there are those things like the trolley derby, where people see you and you get together. We weeded the rhododendrons as part of "Keep Dunedin Beautiful" and this guy that we'd never seen before stuck his head out the window and said, "would we like a cup of tea?" that we'd never met before, so that was quite nice. It's just being about, because you do these newsletters and things and we have these meetings once a month and send newsletters to 1000 people in the community, that's how many we distribute every month, and never get many to the group. But you do, there's a way of communicating to people what's going on and they do respond. They kind of feel like they are a part of the community, even if they don't physically turn up to things, people have said so many times they like receiving the little bits of info, they like being part of something, that there's a group rather than just some inner city. There's a lady down in Lees St who actually sends the newsletter to her daughter when she gets it. Because she had a new neighbour moved in and she said "Did you get your newsletter?" and the neighbour said, "No, I didn't", and she said "Well I can't show you mine because I always send mine to my daughter to let her know what's happening in the area".

There's things that we do as a group, like we said, the speed bumps and the Market Reserve and all that, all those things are all great things that as a community group that we've done - but I think for me the really, really best thing about the community group is that's there's somewhere every month, really, really good guest speakers, that people can come along and be part of the group. I can remember last Christmas there were all these things going on and having these wonderful pre-Christmas this and pre-Christmas that, works do's and all these sorts of things and our I don't think there would have been any better thing going on, it was small, there was only a few people, and it was the best pot-luck I've ever been, community spirited that I think you'd ever feel anywhere and that's the thing with a community group, it actually makes you feel part of the community, it's kind of like a bigger family, even though you don't know everybody, but there was a special feeling. It was very laid back, and when we had a pot luck last year it was a midwinter, and we advertised it as a midwinter, and out of the blue some guy who had never been to a meeting before rang up and said "I do haggis, and I'm quite prepared to make a haggis and bring it along, I make homemade whiskey to go with it", and things like that. You know, just by reading the newsletter and he did that and came along. So that's what it's all about, more so than the benefits of *things* in the community - it's those sort of things and I think it's just fantastic.

Community consultation

When that night shelter opened, which has been terrific, but when that first opened there was a lot of concern by some people living near it - well not just actually the ones living very close but the wider area, and so we had a *special* meeting, because we were the group that you'd go to, because it's our community. People got involved and had good

faith, because people in most communities don't have anywhere to go. Something comes up that they're really unsure of and probably a bit frightened of that one. What we did we felt quite good about because for a start they'd only invited the residents that were there and I was invited as well so we actually went as a community as well, and what we achieved by that was that we actually managed to get two of our members – one of our committee members and another member of the community on there to attend their meetings, so we have had some liaison and input and it hasn't ended. As it is turned out to be as threatening as we thought it would be, but the thing that we found really hard was the way that they went about opening it because they didn't want to cause a lot of adversity in the community, they did it secretly whereas if they'd gone and consulted, especially with us as a community group, they probably would have got quite a bit of help and maybe volunteers from the area as well. It's probably turned out all right in the end but it did cause a lot of animosity and things for a start.

Membership changes

When the previous secretary stepped down it was a bit hard for me because she is very organised and had been there for so long so she knew what she was doing, but she sort of helped us along the way, we've had a few hiccups in administration because we've had people that have been willing to do the job but haven't - not haven't got the *expertise*, but haven't quite been sure how to do it. Treasurer has been a tricky one to get someone to do well.

We've got two members of our committee that were there when the group first started, and they're still on the committee, so we're going to make them life members at this next meeting. We made the previous secretary a life member last time but that was as much to reward her for what she'd done but also to hopefully keep her interest.

We're 11 years old this year, we're very lucky because with monthly meetings we always get a speaker, and Lisa's our absolute prime motivator there, because she's in other groups especially Friends of the Library who have wonderful speakers, so of course they're a great tap-in.

We've had to combine secretary/treasurer at the moment and because of different circumstances that happened. But I think because we're a reasonably close-knit group we sort of work in with and help each other so that nothing like that actually becomes a problem.

As people move to the area it's quite interesting that we do get new people coming along to meetings and sometimes it can be just because the speaker that we've got actually appeals, and then once they come along – 'cause there's a little lady up the road and she'd been meaning to come and meaning to come and now she just loves the company so much she just comes every meeting. And we try and encourage it that it's a good way to meet your neighbours and things like that and we try to make it quite social. We try to make it so that it's not too much; we try and deal with as much business at the committee meeting so that there's not so much business side when we actually have the community thing.

I haven't been in the group for all these years that it's been going, but I always loved getting the newsletter would come in the mailbox and stuff, so you think, this sounds like a good group, but just took no interest in it at all, then you start taking an interest so therefore suddenly you become more community aware so then it's hard to judge. Is the community becoming more of a community *or* is it because I'm now interested in it? But you *feel* more of a community, so it's really hard to quantify those sorts of - like I would say it feels much more of a community than it ever did before even though I know a lot more people now because of going along to groups.

But it's interesting, the lady down the road shifted from Auckland, she wanted to have her business down here and it was basically because in Auckland she had to drive her kids everywhere and she said here she could walk to and from, and she's really enjoyed the things that we do in the community, she said in Auckland you couldn't - because communities don't sort of work similar to that.

I think once we'd really accepted the fact that it wasn't the number of people that came to our meeting, it was the people that came that really enjoyed themselves, then we stopped focusing on the fact that we wanted lots of people there, we'd always say to the speakers that we don't have big numbers and that didn't really worry them, and sometimes I think that's quite good because it makes it more...people just sit round in a circle. The night we just had 4 of us and the speaker and we just sat round the heater with a cup of tea, it was a little bit unusual that night, usually there's about 10 to 20. So even in the winter we've never cancelled a night, at Christmas time when we have our Christmas picnic we always still keep the Deaf Society hall booked but the last 2 picnics we've had down there even though it's been really cold, everyone's just put warm gear on and just stayed. I think it's a really interesting thing that - because often now things are so focused around, you've got have the numbers, you've got to do - whereas I think what you're saying is that it's really amazing how by just keeping that going and you're just catering for different needs at different times you're actually still keeping quite a big community in touch with each other.

There's probably more people sort of doing up places and the building of more flats and things like that, so the area's actually improving. Rather than houses going they're either getting knocked down or they're being done up, there's a group of guys that have actually bought or leased a couple of houses round here and they go in and they do them up, do up the grounds and then move up the road and do the same thing.

You almost have to just sort of break it up into the areas because you only really, really know your own little area, don't you? I'm sort of just thinking down where we are, on Maitland St., seems quite stable, but then it's fairly cyclic actually, especially in this inner city area you have these sort of quiet times where it seems to be just older people or more stable people in employment and all that sort of stuff, and then at other times you get a couple of houses that are really go-ey then suddenly it's back to the way it always used to be, it comes and goes - but it seems very stable at the moment. We've got a house across the road that a group of dental students have bought and so they are living in there and

then the house next door parents bought it for their children to live in so they've got other and there is becoming quite a few of those sort of places. There's another one on the market that the students have finished so the parents are selling it because it's not needed, so a lot of it's not landlord / tenants, it's parents buying it for their kids. So although there are younger ones in the area, it's not the same. But then there are still some ratbags that even though you write to the landlords, because they don't live here, they're out of town landlords, it doesn't actually achieve anything.

Funding

We probably just rely pretty much on what our subscriptions give us, except for when we have a project going. We originally had a reasonable group of people who were subscribers to the community group but that has sort of lapsed over the last couple of years probably just with the change of personnel and we just weren't aware of how they'd done it before, but we've had a bit of a drive, and people are very, very good actually because they were giving not just the subscription but they were putting a donation in as well. It's not just residential people that are members and give us a donation, there's quite a lot of businesses in the area become members and they get the newsletter and they mightn't ever come to a meeting but they still are willing to support us if we need the help. We make quite a thing when we did the wee drive and stuff that it doesn't disqualify you at all, no one will ever know whether you were member or not, or whether you paid any money, or whether you are just coming along because you wanted to see the speakers. Anyone is welcome to come along and listen to our speakers, whether you are a member or not doesn't make any difference. The money that we get basically goes to help put out the newsletter and the odd little things that we have. We deliver it to 1000 households or businesses and have 40 – 50 households are members.

All I only know is DCC grants really, you have to apply for it, say what it's for, they give you the money, you then have to justify it and show that you've spent it on what you'd actually. That's the only place we've really got money from, because we'd actually applied for other ones but we didn't actually get the funding from them. The money we got from the Irish Lodge, we were quite lucky that I knew someone in the Irish Lodge, and then we applied, and we knew that they were wanting to give some money away and could they meet down the bottom of the hill, so the Market Reserve is on their back door, it sort of helped. The other money that we did get toward that picnic table was from a Probus group that meets across the road from so they sort of had given us some money towards something in the way of chairs and things so we waited until we got our picnic table and added their name to them.

We just usually just fill out the form, it's good in a way because as we're a small group there's not many people giving money but those that do, because you're the committee and responsible for it, you do want to actually be able to show that there's no fiddling the books, that all the money that you do get in, that it's all squeaky clean, and of course it's got to go through the to an accountant each year and you've got to do a return because we're an incorporated society it has to be properly filed and things. It can be frustrating because you've got to really know what you're doing to fill (application forms) them out, because if you fill them out right you've maybe got a chance of getting the money, but if

you don't sort of meet the criteria or fill it out properly and you've got to really justify the project that you're doing. I think mainly the fact that you've got to be able to show that you've raised something as well.

Even when you look at when we decided to do the tour of the Crown Flour Mill, it started off as an idea and as it went on we had more and more fun, because it just became fun because everybody just started helping and instead of becoming like a project or a chore or things. Every time you had a meeting it was everybody's ideas and it was just a friendship thing, a social thing to organise it as well. At the end of the day everybody benefits as well as and you feel you have achieved something. The fact that it's a PR thing, as once you start to do things then people see that the Fernhill Community Group is still around and that they're fundraising to do something with a purpose and it's going to benefit the whole city. It is a lot more fun than lots of other things you could be doing. Because you're not here to make a profit, you're just here to fill the need, so it's not a chore at all, is it? You meet lots of other people in the community you probably wouldn't have any other way, just by doing that. And even with our deliveries of our newsletters - there's lots of people in the area that just go out and do it. There's one lady that's not even a member of our group, but I've just met her because we deliver pamphlets, and she just does her wee area because she quite enjoys going for a walk.

Newsletter

One person does the newsletter and drops it in my mailbox and I take it down and get it printed and bring it back here and count it and then we put rubber bands round it and then we just go round and throw them in everybody's mailboxes and then they do it from there. We've got a team of volunteers that have their own area, we've actually got a map and they've got their own area that they deliver.

Usually we're trying to find things to put in it, but when we knew the night shelter was looking for men's clothing, so you put that in. So it was a place where people could come and I know we focused a little bit on new businesses so we made a point of it, if we see a new business we would go and say to them, "would you like to put a wee blurb in it", say about a half a page of what they want to put in, that's sort of been good for them.

Historically we try and take an account of what this area has been through, and we try and do it in the newsletter a bit too, like we did a bit of a thing on all the hotels that have - we've got no idea how many hotels there have been in this area, there's lots of fascinating things that have - because we've got the Lebanese community, so you try very much to put all those sorts of things out really.

Last time we had our potluck lunch Bell Tea rung up and said "well, we read in the newsletter that you're having a pot luck lunch, we've got a box of tea that we thought you might like" and we had 2 teabags left, so they gave us a great big box of tea. But they also asked us about other places in the community because they had boxes of tea that they wanted to give, so they gave some to the night shelter and the Sally Army, and a lot of the halfway houses round here as well, they just wanted to know where else that they

could donate it to and out of that they became members and interested in what we're doing as well.

When we wanted to promote the Crown Flour Mill tour and we needed four businesses to sponsor the add I didn't know where to go because I'd already asked a lot of the local businesses for raffle prizes, so the Star newspaper ladies went round and approached businesses in this area that actually advertise with them and so then that actually gave us an opening to go down and talk to those people, some of them who were members and some of them who weren't. It was a good chance to go down and thank them, but also for them to say that although they'd love to come to the group they could be very busy so they can't, but they still take an interest in it.

Blueskin Bay, Waitati put out this community newsletter and they rang up to see if we could send them a copy of ours and they'd send us a copy of theirs, so we could swap just to see what other groups do really.

We have got members that attend the neighbourhood support things, but it's become very hard over the years because there has been so many different coordinators and things but I think naturally people round here do to a certain extent keep an eye on their neighbours anyway.

We had someone from the Mental Health at one stage who'd sent us a letter about something that was coming up so we actually invited them along as a guest speaker, and the same with the likes of Citizen's Advice and things like that.

2002: Pasifica Women

Beginnings

Pasifica Women was started by our founder Paddy Walker in the 1970's who is part Samoan, and part European. She had meetings with the North Island Women from the Pacific. They all agreed that we needed to form an organisation of Pacific Island Women, not only for one Island group because there are seven or more islands in the Pacific. She traveled down to Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and lower down to Invercargill, the lower South Island, and Bluff. I was in Invercargill and that was in 1975. Everywhere she went the women just wanted to belong. For me down there I've never seen other Pacific Island people before. I moved down to Invercargill in 1965 not knowing anyone but my own family and relations. I really missed Auckland where I came to live from Samoa. It was just great to have an organisation set up - I felt a belonging - there were women from Tonga, from Niue, from Cook Island, from Fiji, from Tokelau - they were like all sisters to me.

Paddy explained to us that it's really important because we came from the Islands to build our home in Aotearoa and therefore it's good to have something to distribute and also to make decision for ourselves, our families, and also contribute to the community nationally and that's how it started.

Our very first conference of Pasifika was held in Wellington, hosted by the Wellington branch, and since then every year a branches hosts us - we just had a conference in Palmerston North in February 2002. It is something that we all look forward to go and share and also to talk about the organisation - how we move and see things that we need to do, activities, especially sharing activities of ourselves, skills that each and everyone of us has to share, and it's wonderful.

My family moved up to Dunedin in 1982 because my husband got transferred. Because I was a financial member of Pasifika in Invercargill I can go to any branch and become a member automatically. In 1985 I decide to start another branch here because I felt other women wanted to join. I wanted to change the way of promoting and I felt that we need more activities to attract other members. I resigned from the other branch and set up this branch and we called this new branch the Dunedin Central Branch. I felt, well we all felt that this name covers the whole of Dunedin for everyone to join.

I had to talk to different women that I knew weren't in a branch - they'd never heard of Pasifika and that's how it started. As long as you have five members you can start a branch. You can set up a branch, and pay a subscription to the executive to cover your membership fee. We had twelve women who wanted to join. Last year we had eighteen members.

Successes

Each region has their own mini conferences every year so we are having our mini conference here in Dunedin in September. It's really helpful to have these mini

conferences in different regions so that when we come to hold the election people know whom they vote for, people know what skills each other's got. It's really great and the things that we do together are fantastic. At every conference we run our fashion parade - you know your make and wear, our arts and crafts, we run our weaving competition, dancing competitions, speech competition. It's fantastic to come together and encourage people have confidence in themselves and to know each other from different islands.

We have hosted the executive Council meeting for the national body, and we have hosted South Island mini conferences - the branch is strong in tackling things to do with the organisation and also with our community here in Dunedin.

Mother comes from the Cook Islands, I'm from Samoa, and Julia is a New Zealand born Samoan Indian. The reason why she wanted to join Pasifika, where her mother started as a foundation Member, was because she wanted to learn her own culture. Although I learnt my own culture in the home it was important for me to meet with other women too because we had a lot of things in common and a lot a skills that we could share

Funding

We meet monthly - we go through our agenda and our financial statements, we haven't got much money although we do do some of our own fundraising activities. We do a lot of fundraising, also during our monthly meetings we donate two dollars each at our monthly meetings. We also hold raffles just for fun and that raises a little bit of money for ourselves. But the main ones we do are holding big dances - Last year we ran a big fundraising dance at Zingari Rugby Club and earlier this year in January we ran another dance at the South Dunedin Town Hall. The last dance was a 'Hawaiian Night' theme. We'll just organise the food amongst ourselves and sell tickets at a reasonable price and we have cultural items and then the band. It's open to everyone, you know no one's excluded. The funding goes towards those who were attending our Conferences.

Sometimes we apply for funding and we get declined. But we've done so much. Not only are we going to work - we organise our children, school, meals for the family and our husbands. To work in an organisation it's not easy so I can understand some women that haven't got time to come to monthly meetings. We try to make it fun. We have some speeches, run the meeting and then have activities or some singing. We always like to run our own workshop of learning different dances from different island groups because it is important that our children and grandchildren understand and learn.

We organise planning meetings where we decide roughly what we're going to do over the next year and sometimes we've got so many ideas that come forward that we have to prioritise those ideas and work on the ones that are top priority for us. We also applied last year for some funding to tutor our weaving courses which we did for the last three months - we started in November and then March and April for three months.

We get a lot of school teachers too who like to pass it on to the next generation of children coming up. By sharing those skills it means we're sharing understanding too of our cultures which is important in a country like New Zealand

Monthly meetings and other activities

We have an agenda, we have a chairperson, a president, and we have a secretary, treasurer. We talk about how we're going, what's happening, what can we do in the future. We plan. At our monthly meetings we'll be talking on the agenda about what's happening at the moment, what's coming up soon that we need to plan for according to our yearly plan. We've done quite a lot of activities in the last two years - we've done weaving workshops, the dance fundraisers, flower making, garland making.

I don't know if other organisations do this but you know different members that are good at certain things. We work best that way to use our strengths. I might have a weakness that somebody else is strong at and that's the way to do it I think.

We organise Women's Day at Burn's Hall – Women's Day is open to all cultures – not just our Pacific women. It's a good way of sharing with the rest of the community. Different ways of tying the lavalava up when you go to the beach or wear it on the street or when you dance.

We have associated ourselves in the area of health - with The Otago Health Trust we had a display. We were leading exercise and music to the Women's Health Day that was organised by the Otago Health Trust. We exercise, gentle exercise to music so we were asked to lead that night for the women and it was so fun and the women from the First Church wanted Pacifica to come back and work with them on the exercise. It was really great because I play the uke too and we do a lot with the sound of the ukulele and the singing of the women. We were at the 'Cooking up a Storm' for the Health Trust – we were asked to cook up the mince - low fat low salt and less sugar things that were important for nutrition, - especially looking at low fat meals and how to prepare. We always demonstrate healthy cooking in the Community.

We've done 'positively me' workshops where we've worked on things like our self esteem, looking after yourself, body massage, exercise, nutrition, communication, lots of things.

Just looking at some of the other things we've done, we've organised the netball social team at the Edgar Centre; we had a Christmas Break-up with the rest of our Pacific Community. Everyone that we identified out there was welcome to come and join us for that Break-up which we funded. I thought if we do it again it might be a nice idea to get each of them to take different areas that they can fund and then it's not such a big exercise for us. We associate with other women like the Dunedin Tongan Women's Council. We're also associated with groups like the Otago Samoan Students' Association

Another group we've been involved with too is the Pacific Island Advisory Council -we are members with them too. They can support the sort of activities that we're doing and vice versa when they're organising activities they'll invite Pacifica. We run workshops

on home remedies like making your own healing remedies out of leaves, cough mixture out of onion, honey, garlic, ginger and lemon juice - natural things you can use for your own health instead of running to the doctor to get pills that will sometimes give you the side effects.

Once or twice a year we've booked Millervale at Warrington for a Retreat, I think that it's important that women have a retreat. That's when we do our healing workshops and massaging. Walking along the beach, maybe picking up sea shells. It felt so good, we just had one the first weekend of May. We go twice a year for our retreats and we look forward to it every time, it's a fun time - a relaxing time. We take our tapes and do gentle exercise and do yoga.

Julie Pearce (Community Employment Group Advisor) has been helping with leadership for Pacific Island women – there may be members from the South Island branches that are available to do this and then go back and share what they've learnt with the rest of the women.

We sometimes apply for funding for the workshops. In the past we got sick of applying for funding and turned down I suppose because people didn't want to know that we exist, I tell you a lot of people don't want to know us. But the last two years we've been fairly successful since I've been the president. Julia has sent, was it four applications this year and last year – we've been successful in the applications. I don't think there are really very many applications that are turned down because they are not applicable - it's more just spreading the money. For instance going to a COG's meeting and listening to the other groups that are out there, other community groups and the needs that they have, really opened my eyes to other people who are out there so no I understand that we're not the only group in need

Another activity we're working on at the moment is that we've been successful in an application to Lottery grants and that is for financial training and Mentoring. That's something that I see as a key need for us as a branch.

Challenges

Challenges that we are having in Pacifica is that it started with these founding members in the early '70s and now a lot of them have grown into grandmothers. They had their needs back then as new immigrants coming into the country, bringing up their families in a new land – this is their new home. Now there are the New Zealand born such as myself who may perhaps have different needs and it's being able to let young women out there know, perhaps they are New Zealand born, that this organisation exists for them. We are quite open and happy to have their ideas and their attendance and encouragement to be a part of the organisation and if there are challenges that they are finding now to let us be aware if we can help in some way by putting our heads together. I see that as a challenge for Pacifica now is having the younger generation rather than have Pacifica die off. I think it's a useful organisation.

Changes

Women are more confident in themselves in just getting out, keep doing what they believe in and the younger generations are just coming in –it's a great asset to the organisation to have our next generation moving in with the knowledge and experience. One of our New Zealand born is now our national president and she's a top educated person, she is great for the organisation. So maybe we build the foundation and our younger generation will carry on with the knowledge and experience. I'm satisfied with what I see - the way we dreamt of the organisation because we all put our heads and hearts together to make it happen. It's recognised by the government.

We have some Maori women, we used to have some Europeans but while they join the organisation as members we won't allow them to take positions. We feel that for Pacific women to come this far, it is better to have their knowledge and their own culture to be given the position of leadership in the organisation. It's not a racist decision.

You know Pasifika started with different needs for their women from their country, for instance when there were the dawn raids Pasifika in the seventies stood up to government for the needs of their families in the way they were being treated – it was Ok for the government to have Pacific Islanders come over for cheap labour in the factories and you know it suited New Zealand and then there was the over-stayers. There's a lot of things that go back that Pacifica has involved itself in politically.

One thing I think is the biggest thing for us is to listen and to learn in New Zealand is that we all come from a lot of different backgrounds living in this land but I think we need to look at goals of how we can live in harmony.

Knowing that we all have different backgrounds but to live together and care for one another and understand each other.

Pasifika's like a family – an extended family, we all have our own families we go home to, but Pasifika is quite a unique organisation where we can feel comfortable with each other and know that we can confide in each other. That is what Pacifica is all about, sharing knowledge and also I because we live in this cold country, well when it's winter, you know you feel isolated and I think it's good to have other people's ways like our dancing.

We have just said goodbye to one of our brothers, Te Ariki who was the leader of the Kia Orana Dancing Group and he was also working with Pacifica. He loved to come to Pacifica Women and organise things to do - he was our first Pacific Island health promoter in our Pacific Island Trust, and then he was the one who came to Pacifica and got us to do things with health workshops, cooking, and exercises, and now he's gone - we've lost a great leader, another great leader.

When we have groups we can plan ahead like getting younger people involved so they carry on the dream but when people die fairly young it leaves a big gap. It is important to have all age groups in an organisation. Younger women come to the shop and I try to

introduce them to Pacifica and they say “Oh I thought it’s only just for the older women.” We try to attract school children to participate. Pasifika also organises education grants for students that can apply – this is nationally – and they can apply and send in their marks and how well they’re doing - that’s another good thing that Pacifica does.

We also have second chance Education grants for women returning to training for the workforce. People that are working in there now don’t know the history of our fund and I remember when I was in Invercargill the time we sent \$1000.00, we fundraised twice. Two big dances, and we sent \$5000.00 from each fundraising, it was hard work to keep out for the benefit of our children and not just members of Pacifica’s children can apply to it – for any wider community of Pacific Island children. There is so much that Pacifica has done for the community as a whole but we’re still going very strong and supporting each other, there’ll be no stopping, there’ll be no way of saying “that’s enough.”

2008: Pasifica Women

Recognition and consolidation

Pacifica has been going for 32 years now, we just had a 30th celebration the beginning of this year, in Christchurch, and the whole South Island hosted it. We were so proud to be able to host our 30th year celebration. We were able to bring our founder, Paddy Walker, who started this organisation. Paddy Walker is part Samoan, part European and she's always involved with passion, and also she had this dream about the Pacific women who came to live in this country and make their home, and she found that they need to make decisions and they need to have a voice to support the government of New Zealand, and to live in harmony, not just come here to live - this is what her dream, her goal. Paddy Walker is retiring now in the Cook Islands, and every conference she comes, she comes and she sees that her dreams are flourishing, and it's moving on.

Working with Government

We became adviser to the Minister of Health for the national screening programme so that we can - I think Pacifica is the only organisation that can advise the Minister of Health on how to treat the women, how to make them happy to come forward, because it's very tough to talk about sexual activities with Pacific Island people, but I think they agree that Pacifica will be the adviser to them. So now we're able to have meetings. We have Women's Day meeting in Dunedin maybe once, twice a year, and we talk openly to our women about it. And also we organise free screening programmes so they can come and have a free - so they can feel - you know, feel good about the women, and those who are trained to do the job.

We been having meetings with the Ministry of Pacific Island affairs, with the CEO; that we would like to work with them alongside in this topic of Pacific women's wellbeing and economics. And we've done the research and the women are - they gave their honest explanation of what they were doing, you know, when they came here with their families and they still - we thought *surely* there would be big changes from that and also Pacifica is adviser to that.

Also we update our scholarship fund, we took it off the government because it wasn't run very successfully. You know how they change to the government to the education department, they just mix our fund with other things, with the government fund, and when our students apply to the fund it took long time to come, or they get their cheque bounced, so it was very, very sad; and so we asked for our money back, and they asked us, we can't have it back until we pay them administering it. We had the committee and always every year, or every 2 years we had 2 members of Pacifica to sit in a committee to select who to give the fund to, because we had to look at the marks of the people, we had to see the letter from the institute where they study, we have to see their marks, whether to - before we release the money, so now we ask for our money back.

So 2003 we discuss it at our AGM and we all agree that we're going to top up, and there's 3 regions that we divide Pacifica into 3 regions - it's North and Central and South Island. And I'm Vice President for South Island. So we fundraise again and target is

\$10,000 per region. Last year South Island was the first region that paid up their target of \$10,000. So now, we allowed to get our reward. Anyone can apply to the fund for study. It was \$32,000 for a start, we only used the interest. When we got it back it was only \$22,000. It wasn't fair to the way we're thinking, it wasn't right, but we accept it was better something than nothing. I think we've got \$70-something thousand now.

We are not like the Maori Women's Welfare League. They're a very rich organisation. They have their big fund from the government, and also the National Council of Women. They are our sisters' organisations and Pacifica hasn't got anything yet but so far we are trying to prove ourselves, so hopefully we can get to that – that way.

Knowledge of women

Pacifica runs successfully with the knowledge of women; we run out of fun, because there was a time when people were looking after – *administrate* - the organisation those days, I think sometimes they make the mistake of applying for some funding and put into something else, so we weren't allowed to apply for any more funding for a couple of years or so, it was well over 10 years ago. I think we understood how to do things better, and I think with the women and the knowledge that they go back to learn, and *also* how to run our meetings successfully and also professionally, and you've got to do things professionally and better. All we do is just promote and to build our members because the more we do things the more we satisfy and to be seen doing it right.

Links with other organisations

We always link with Maori Women's Welfare League. We exchange speakers. Well, we always ask for them to come and speak at our AGM as well as theirs; and the National Council of Women. For a start, we were members, affiliated to the Council of Women and the Maori Women's Welfare League. Now we just doing our own thing now. But the reason why is because we are learning from them. And also it's important that we have the older women because they are wiser at making a right decision, and then we looking to them; we also ask for their advice for the things that we are doing and then to pass onto our younger generation, it makes sense when they look at it.

I'm also sitting on other boards with our community, with Health Trust, and also this is good for Pacifica to sit on other boards so that they can bring back to the organisation what we learn - the organisers - and we take it to where we involved with and I think it's good to work alongside other organisations to support and make it stronger.

I've learned so much from Pacifica (and have bought that knowledge to other groups). I've learned to listen to – I can tell the difference, when I go there I feel that the man domineering the meeting and I will learn to speak up, I learn to speak up for the rights. A lot of things to do with common sense and also conflict of interest, those are the sorts of things that people are so mix up. I will learn to speak up, this is a conflict of interest, and they all jump up to me, they say, "what do you mean?" I mean some members of our board and their wife or their daughter is a staff of our board, well, when we say things that we wanted to run the organisation for and how to change things around, then one of the family will not like it, instead of leaving the room.

Changing priorities

The branch has grown to 22, 25 financial members and we manage to have our younger generation become residents and run the branch, and we still advise, we still there to advise, and we're happy to see that in the hands of girls that they manage to do well.

My own daughter, she's the youngest daughter, and she just joined earlier this year. The older girls, they've been in Pacifica for a while, and one is our national treasurer. And another was our past president of our local branch now another girl of her age become our president. So the position holders are in the younger generation age. Our focus is on young people now. Because they see the younger girls are running the organisation they are moving in.

We had to look at the girls, we had to look at our young people and see what's their needs. At our last AGM in Christchurch we thought oh, just do something different so the opening was opened by the dancers. There was a worship for a start and a prayer, and straight after that the dancers were on the stage and they *moved*, and you know the younger generation thought, wow, this is their thing, so a lot of them were booked to learn how to dance with my grand-daughter. We started to learn to look at our young ones and to see them involved in things that they should be doing instead of being on the street and the next thing they involved with drugs and things like that. The dancers will be performing in Nelson when I go next week, I've already arranged it, because we can see that's the only thing we can win their hearts and minds. There's a lot of other things they can do – fashion parades, it's up to them. All the hard work that - all these things that Pacifica are introducing to involve our youngsters.

At the moment we are promoting to build our branches. I'm going to Nelson, hopefully that we'll set up a branch in Nelson; and I'm going to promote in Timaru, we haven't got a branch in Timaru; we got one in Oamaru and next year Invercargill is hosting our mini conference, every branch in the South Island is hosting a mini conference. This year it was hosted by Christchurch in August. We have to bring information from each one, we have to – and every time we meet is the AGM for our mini conference we have a caucus meeting, you know, about what individual branch needs and we go from there, share what's the women's needs.

Since I've been in the Executive I could see South Island flag is flying high, because I think we manage to relate to each other better. I don't know what it is, but in North Island they don't do things together, and I think because of the big population, they are so busy doing their own individual thing so it's very hard to come together. When we meet in North Island, there's not many North Island or the branch that hosting it, coming. They still got to work; but here we manage to plan ahead, we manage to ask the bosses at work that we take time off for Pacifica and we have good bosses down here, and I've been running my own business for a long time, I close the shop – you know – because other things are important to me; and also I try to keep my customers happy and I also say to them, I'm going to be closing this day or these times because of other things; and I find that I'm balanced that way; and also our women are doing well – not just thinking of the

money, we haven't got the money – but if you have women to do things you move, it happens.

Funding

We have changed. Well, our old branch here, we are very lucky because two of our members are singers, they run their own band and they offered themselves to play for our fundraisers and they play for nothing, and because they're members of the organisation they do that. All we do is hire a hall, they perform, and we have our money, and it's good money that comes to us for our fundraising. So anything we that want to do we just fundraise, put our hands together and our heads together, and you know, we're happy with the outcome.

It's harder now too, the grants, the government grants. Our community trust are very good to us; I hosted our mini conference last year and of course I charged a registration, and I went to our community trust because I just picked up hosting the mini conference because the other branch aren't able to do it, but I did it for the whole region. So I quickly thought - I went and faced the community trust and they were really, really good to give some funds to host that, and then I have to report how the meeting go and where the money spent.

If you honest for what you ask for (from the Community Trust), it's just tick what's there and if you don't use it all then you just say, "we've got another programme that we want to put on it." Just be honest and just do it properly. I mean it's quite easy and you feel happy, you feel good when that's done. I mean, you know, it's not your money; if you borrow money to do something, well you have to work on it. It's nothing when you just put the amount there of what you ask, take away what you spent, and if some is always spare.

So the other place that we go to is the COGS, we haven't applied to COGS, we always busy to think of other things because we don't get paid for the voluntary things that we're doing for the branch.

We don't really have the energy to apply to everything else that's there, we know that we are a good organisation but we just couldn't be bothering, so we just have to look after what we've got and see what's happen, just keep on fundraising, having socials and – charge people to come and socialise with us and have a bit of supper.

How to run a (not boring) meeting

We still running monthly meetings. A lot of meetings we'll learn not to have a boring meeting. We run little raffles or we donate a gold coin to put in the bank, just to build our bank, or we have food tasting and just listen to music and talk about things that we want to talk about instead of long meetings so we learn to cut down our time and meetings and learn to entertain ourselves. Sometimes we go to the coffee bar or go to the movies.

Those are fun times we have – you know, socials and things like that, and when you host it you've got to look at making money as well, so this is why they have a fun social evening and charge people to come and socialise with Pacifica; have items in the night for everybody; and that's how we do it.

It's just like when I sit at home and not doing anything and then I don't even think of doing anything else because I have nothing to plan but if we plan, we plan. That's another thing we've learned to do – strategic planning and learn to move. It's really helpful because strategic planning, we have to – to go around the table and 'what do you want to happen'? So we gather all those things together and then we come up with the result.

We had the CEG's girls, there was something wrong with our branch; and we had a lot of strategic planning with them, we had a lot of training, and, well of course we applied for that fund and they made sure that we used that fund wisely and properly. And so with that closed, we thought that was a good thing that we involved with, training our women. And a lot of our women are retiring.

We also plan to go on a cruise ship, we plan to do it in 2 year's time, maybe 2010. We supposed to do it this year or next year but because we so busy and always something comes up so we had our strategic planning meeting at Warrington with Invercargill branch, they came up and it was so fun, and that's what we came up; when we paid up our scholarship target, fundraise for scholarship; and then we fundraise for our trip on the cruise ship. Well, we haven't booked but where we can go from here to Australia, New Caledonia, you know, go around the Pacific. Whether that or go straight to Samoa or go to Rarotonga, or go to Tahiti, just to go to other islands that - you know - from where our other sisters come from.

Evolution

Some new women come to South Island, they heard of Pacifica but they never involved; some of the young women they from high schools, from the students from the university; and my own niece that's at high school, she's involved, and my grand-daughter – she's moving to Christchurch now she's already in. I think because they've seen their mothers, what they were doing, my own daughters, 3 of them, when they became mothers, they thought - what mum's doing – but when they get to understand, their own family came along and they got to understand, no wonder Mum is different, Mum is always different, we wonder why she always go to these meetings. When they grew up, now they're very involved.

There's a lot of older women. One of them – my friend who was the Central Vice President - she's moved to Tokoroa. When she arrived in Tokoroa she saw a lot of older women, they don't even do anything, they don't even drive, and she e-mailed me and she said, "Do you think I can start a branch of the older ladies that can't drive, they can't go out to meetings at night?" I said, "sure you can."

From my own family what I'm saying about my daughters, because my husband is always involved, always supporting me. When I was the President of Pacifica, when there

was events happening, He was prepared to sweep, pick up rubbish and take it and the boys. In 1992 we went to Samoa for our family reunion. My 2 girls were married and had children and they saw the work that the women in Samoa were doing. The women were – you know - just *spot on*, and I didn't even realise that my girls were watching these women, and they said, "Mum, the women are so hard working, they do everything. They look after the kids. They go and do all the cooking for the Council of Chiefs, they do the washing, they clean the property, that's when they started to think, the women are doing beautiful work, the women move the village, the women do everything, the family, the organisation – so they came here and they start to join. They join Pacifica. And when they joined I felt so relaxed, because I was doing things on my own, and my family don't know why I'm there for, so when they came and joined, my secretary never turn up, so one took over the minutes; and that's how it changed. The younger ones came, so they *saw* that happening, so, it's changing. Their own friends came and joined. So the support is there from the family for a start, and then from their friends, so everyone's involved.

2002: St Kilda Community Club

Beginnings

The St Kilda Community Club started rather accidentally in a way, to make use of a building that was threatened with demolition. After the 1939-45 war when a lot of immigrants were coming into the country, the males were separated from the females, and a building at the Central Battery was used as temporary accommodation for the men. When that accommodation was no longer required, and the Victoria Flats complex for the elderly had been built, the building was resited and used as a clubroom by the flat's residents. People congregated there for a variety of activities and to watch television. Over time residents purchased their own television sets and preferred to stay at home.

As the building was no longer being used by the residents and was being frequented by undesirables, the St Kilda Borough Council considered having it demolished. Councillor Anne Turvey thought that the building was too good for that. She organised a public meeting of interested people to consider forming a club of some sort based at the building. Although only a small number of people attended that meeting a resolution was made to form a club. A committee was formed, plans were drawn up and the support of the Borough Council was gained.

Considerable work was required on the building. A Task Force Green worker was employed to repaint the interior and the Council installed toilets, there being none in the part of the building the club was to occupy. A lot of voluntary work was undertaken by members of the committee. Soon after it was set up the St Kilda Community Club was registered as an incorporated society. Being incorporated enabled the Club to access funding that it needed. Initially the St Kilda Borough Council was helpful, but essentially the club was independent.

Before amalgamation with the city there was always a very definite line between what was St Kilda and what was South Dunedin and people were very adamant about where they lived. At that stage the St Kilda Community Club was for residents of the borough only. Since amalgamation the club has been open to everyone and as many members now come from outside the former borough as from within it. We have helped to break down the barrier that used to exist.

The two main aims of the club were to provide social and recreational activities for residents and to take an active interest in community affairs; for example, when the Dunedin City Council wanted to close both the library and the Service Centre we protested strongly. The Service Centre has now been closed but we still have the library.

In 1985 the main club activity was the painting group. They have always had about thirty or forty people who come along every week. Another early group aimed to preserve photographs and records of older houses in the area. We also began playing euchre, a craft group was set up, and regular quiz nights were held. An elderly fitness group was established, and for a time line dancing was popular. We have a walkers group that arranges its own three-monthly programme and includes walks in many

interesting places that can be reached by car. There is also a gardeners group and a Mahjong group.

Researching the Community

As a club we have undertaken two research projects. The first one focused on "The Social and Recreational needs of the Elderly in St Kilda". For this we received funding from the Community Organisations Grants Scheme (COGS). During interviews for this project our researchers were offered a lot of other information. This encouraged us to organise an oral history project which we called "Memory Bank". For this we received funding from the Internal Affairs Department. During both of these projects our interactions with the elderly was great. We were able to identify their needs more clearly and they were able to tell us their stories. We interviewed about one hundred and forty people in the St Kilda and South Dunedin areas. The tapes are now held by the Otago Settlers Museum. Both projects helped to raise the profile of the St Kilda Community Club.

Challenges

For the first couple of years the prospects of the club were rather dicey. We did not have much money as we were relying entirely on members' contributions for the day to day activities of the club. At that time St Kilda was still a borough with roughly two and a half thousand houses and a population of approximately seven thousand people. A limited amount of direct Government funding was available for distribution by the Borough Council and we were fortunate to receive some assistance from that fund. This fund was eventually replaced by Lottery Grants. Other sources were also available. We have come to rely on all these sources for funding projects other than day to day activities. When we first started out there seemed to be less demand for community funding. Nowadays the competition for funds is so great that there never seems to be enough to go around.

In the beginning we knew that we needed to communicate with people in the community. We decided the best way to do that was to produce flyers that could be distributed through letterboxes. We produced a flyer when we had something specific to communicate. This was made possible with the assistance of St Clair School who ran them off for us. Later we managed to acquire an old duplicator from Otago University which we set up at our house. Eventually, by means of public donations and a small grant from the borough council, we were able to purchase a photocopier. This made it easier for us to put out a regular news sheet and was useful in promoting discussion about amalgamation with the city and other important issues of the day.

Initially the newsletter was purely for the promotion of club activities. Then other groups asked for space to advertise their activities. Gradually what started as a club newsletter became a community newsletter. At the start members of the committee distributed these news sheets. Later, a team of volunteers was organised to do the job and currently about thirty people are involved. These people are not necessarily club members, just people who want to do something useful for their community. After amalgamation we decided to extend distribution into the South Dunedin area as far as Macandrew Road thus adding

to our area of influence.

Organising for Success

The way that the club is organised is important to its success. The club is administered by an executive committee that meets monthly. The groups are largely independent and report to the executive committee through a group leader or convenor who is expected also to be a member of the committee.

The club is open to virtually anyone who wants to join, although we do not cater for young people as we believe they are well catered for elsewhere. There is no charge to join the club but we do make a charge for each activity that people come to. These charges are set at a level that covers the overall costs of running the club and are deliberately kept as low as possible. A register of members is kept.

Until recently we have not had many problems filling the top positions on the executive, although it has sometimes meant a bit of juggling. However, we are now finding it more difficult as office bearers are finding it necessary to stand down through various reasons, mainly growing older. We are very much aware of the problem and will use the newsletter to try to find people who may be interested in becoming involved. We are sure there are such people in the community.

We liaise with many other groups including Age Concern, the Octagon Club, church groups and others. This network has been very useful to us. We have been involved with several community organisations that have been set up for specific projects or with the general aim of promoting the area. The "Main Street" programme was originally sponsored by the Dunedin City Council and involved the South Dunedin Businessmen's Association. It resulted in the upgrading of a part of King Edward Street. Once that was done there was little interest in continuing with the "Mainstreet" committee. It eventually reformed itself into the "Focus Dunedin South" committee, but it also faded away.

More recently we co-operated with individuals from Otago University, Internal Affairs Department and the Dunedin Volunteer Centre to establish "Vision South", based at our clubrooms. This was intended to be another independent group to promote projects in the area, but for various reasons it too is in danger of self-destructing. It may be rescued by becoming a part of St Kilda Community Club. In the meantime it has completed one project - the production of a reference booklet titled "On the Flat", and has another small project under way.

About four years ago we faced a challenge regarding our clubrooms. The building we occupied was divided into sections. We occupied one half and had access to the remainder that had been occupied by the South Dunedin Round Table but was only occasionally being used by them. We had held a lease issued by St Kilda Borough Council for our part of the building at a dollar per year, but this was due to run out. We requested a renewal from the Dunedin City Council, and after considerable delay they came back with a proposed rent increase and provision for a review every three years.

We were prepared to accept this arrangement provided they did something towards maintaining the building. Under the original lease we were responsible for the inside and they were responsible for the outside, but they had done nothing since amalgamation ten years earlier. They maintained that they had no money for maintenance and if they were to spend money on the building they would have to increase the rent of the flats. After a lot of discussion and a meeting with the Mayor it was agreed that some repairs would be carried out and work started. While all this had been going on Councillor Anne Turvey had been working on a different approach, which was to transfer responsibility for the building to the Public Halls account. This was eventually arranged and everything we had originally asked for was done. It is still an old building but at least it now looks reasonably good.

For a club like ours some additional source of funding is essential. The activity fees paid by members is sufficient to cover rent and other running costs, and until recently the cost of producing the newsletter. Increasing costs now make it necessary to seek help with funding the newsletter and for the last two years we have been grateful for assistance from a local pub charity. Their knowledge of the local scene makes the task of approaching them so much easier.

I think the club can rightfully be called a success and I think that has been achieved because of its leadership styles. We have established a place in the community and we have been lucky to have had people who have been committed to the club for many years, but we need to remember that we are not going to be around forever.

2008: St Kilda Community Club

Membership and structure

The most significant change since 2003 is that we have lost a number of the stalwarts of the club. First there was the retirement of our treasurer. He's been an exceptionally brilliant treasurer; but not only treasurer, he did the framing for the art group, he convened the Mah Jong and the Euchre and he was 'the club' really. His wife has been very ill and so she bowed out last year and our Treasurer did this year at this past AGM, and it looks like another of our stalwarts is also going too at this next AGM. I've been Chairperson for the last 2 years and this will be my 3rd year, and if I want to know anything I ring up one of these original members, and I will still be able to do that but the dynamics of the leadership have changed and a lot of the people who are now on the Executive know the background but only just, whereas these people not only knew the background they were the background and the backbone of the whole thing, and so therefore that sort of dynamics is changing. The old guard are all just getting too old, they have served 20-odd years and feel it's time to pass it on and hopefully the new ones will be able to maintain it as good as the old.

The Treasurer left huge shoes to fill. We've had 2 or 3 people doing the same as he was doing. We now have to employ somebody to do the likes of the electricity work and that's another cost, all those little bits and pieces that he did. He was a carpenter and was a fantastic treasurer, and all those little bits and pieces, we just didn't have anybody to fill those shoes at all. We had to get workmen in, and once again it is the membership fee increase that made that possible, which is good.

People are quite willing to go along and pay, and play - it's just a matter of making them aware that they belong to a wider group and to know what the wider group is doing, to go out and report to their [members], and to handle any complaints. For a while we had a lot of complaints about one group and that comes back to Executive and we try and sort it out at that point, where everybody just grizzles and it goes round and round in circles. If it wasn't for the Executive it would be just a whole lot of little groups, and so the Executive make it a cohesive whole.

One of the big things we did was a manual with everything in that manual that you can pass on so that people know what to do and what the club is and what each convenor does. Each group was asked to write up what their group did, and how they met and how they performed so in that manual is a piece written by each of the leaders of each group so that anybody coming in knows what that group is and what goes on. There's one in the clubrooms and anybody can pick it up; and I've got one.

Back to basics

So it's back to the basics, it'll be just the basic groups which are art - art is the biggest group; fitness group and walking group would be the second biggest groups, and they both meet every week; and the walking group, a lot of the older ones have dropped out but we've got a lot of new ones in, younger ones. There always seems to be people

coming along and it has not stagnated by any means; there hasn't been the dropping off of the older ones and nobody coming in, so there's always people coming in. The walking group, we have a pot luck meal every term and all the older ones are invited back, they keep in touch that way. There's Mah Jong, there's Euchre, there's craft. We don't start up a group and expect people to turn up, we start up a group on a suggestion of - if there's somebody that wants to start a garden group they'd have to find the person to run it or lead it and have a few around them to start it up.

Vision Dunedin South was mostly down to one member who was very politically aware; once she goes that will disappear, nobody I wouldn't think would be willing to pick that up. I know that Vision Dunedin South will slowly - well - fastly fade into the background because nobody here - as there were only two people that have ever really been involved in going and doing submissions.

We are connected, we do invite all those sort of people to the AGM, social services; councillors come along if they are interested. We've had the South Dunedin Businessmen's Association so we keep people in touch with those sorts of things if they want to be but there's no forcing of the issue or getting political about it at all.

We do let the place out, and we're getting more and more frequently asked if we will. We've had it hired for dancing, we've had people in the group having parties and that sort of thing, bowling, it's all community based. We've got Toastmasters, we've got wine group, short haired cat club meeting nights.

It's the most used public hall I think in Dunedin because there is something happening every day of the week in the hall. We've got to really juggle if anybody rings up; and say, you can only have Thursday night or something like that.

Changes in funding

The other thing that has changed is that funding is now very, very difficult to come by. A couple of AGMs ago we made a membership fee; what prompted that was the newsletter, it got to the stage where we couldn't afford it any more.

The funding for the newsletter was half ours and half sponsored by a local business. It got more and more difficult with them, they changed the people who do the typing, it just became really difficult and so we eventually made the decision that we would drop it. It was costing us \$400 a month and we really couldn't sustain that. It was also getting more and more difficult to find people to fold it and to do all the voluntary jobs that went along with that, and the people that organised the people that distributed around the streets. Groups were getting more and more difficult to find, but we found them but the main thrust was the money, it just got more and more expensive so we dropped the newsletter and we advertise each month in the Thursday paper, the Star. We also encourage the groups to do their own sort of advertising, maybe put up a flyer or whatever; and we have sustained our groups quite well.

A lot of people missed the newsletter because occasionally we put advertising flyers in it. I think that was where it started to get difficult, when we were charging groups to put in a flyer inside it and people started getting upset about having to add more to the magazine than just fold it and put it in an envelope and boxes, but we needed that extra money to make the thing work, so the decision we really had thought long and hard about the decision to drop it, that was one of our major advertising things really but we did drop it and we advertise each month in the Star and it seems to work, because if I'm along at anything and there's new people I always ask them how they found out about it and it's a mixture between 'I saw the ad' and 'I've got a friend'. So our numbers seem to be very steady.

Membership is still quite large, I should imagine overall we have about 130 members still, and that we will find out for definite when we get our membership fees in, we charge \$5 a year which just gives us that little edge, which is not overly much. For starters I introduced a membership fee for and we made it \$2 a year, and people grumbled of course, they always do, and the art group said if we're going to have it next year we should put it at \$5, and next year we put it at \$5, and I don't think anybody dropped out ever, I also don't think anybody has ever questioned about whether you've paid it or not, for most people it is just the honesty system; and there still is the fee that every time you go along to something you pay whatever that club is. It all goes into one pot; the exercise group - we have a girl from the Phys Ed Dept who comes in and we all pay \$2 to do exercises each morning. Half the money goes to the club and half to her, and they are quite happy with that arrangement; sometimes they get quite a bit and sometimes they don't. But mostly they get a fair fee for their hour and a half's work so it cuts both ways. If it's a bad morning on a wet Monday and there's not many there they don't get such a high fee, but the other half goes back into the club. They provide morning tea and all that sort of thing.

The council sent us a letter saying how, in the hall committees, we are different from everybody else because the outside belongs to the council and the inside belonged to us. They had put aside \$5,000 for helping us with the kitchen; we were going to extend the kitchen, and it just turned out too big a project all round and we abandoned it. The money was still in their pot so they sent us a letter and asked what are we going to do about it? At that time our heater in the hall was not performing very well, and people were complaining about the smell in the kitchen of the gas and so we had a meeting with them, they came back and said yes they'd pay for it, and that was over \$4,000 worth of heating they put in for us which really made a big, big difference to us. They took a note of everything else that was needed; they repainted the hall roof along with all the houses in the area. But we spent that \$5000. That's the only funding we've had. We haven't applied for anything, not since I've been here.

We've also put some more money in an account with a better interest rate. We haven't needed to use it as yet but we have that backing now and we're financially much better off than we've been for a long time, it's something that's been built up over the years.

The inside of the hall is our responsibility, and the hall has a leak in the roof, so until the roof was fixed there's no point in painting the inside of the ceiling but it really does need doing; and it has been fixed now, that's going to cost us quite a bit of money I would think. I think possibly we'll try and get a grant to start with. If not we can just take it out of that reserve.

Community benefits

It keeps neighbours together, I've gone to the lady next door [and asked] 'would you like to go' and we all go along together - so you keep your neighbourhood, and who you know in your neighbourhood. It's (the walking group) quite a social group; they always have a Christmas party for all the groups and we have 2-3 dinners throughout the year, and it just keeps people in touch with other people I think, more than anything; and it gives the older people that haven't got cars somewhere to go within easy reach. A lot of people do walk to the Mah Jong and the Euchre and they don't all bring cars, and the same with all the other groups. I belong to the walking group and the fitness group and a lot of the fitness group all walk to there, whereas you can't walk into town for these; and with the walking group they all meet there and they know that if they haven't got a car they can still be part of the group because those that do have cars use them. Everybody pays a nominal fee and it's all been done on a fair basis. Everybody knows where everybody else lives and if you can't come this week, you ring up Joe Bloggs and they'll tell the convenor. The convenor rings up everybody and says 'a meal is on, come', and you know that just because you haven't been walking doesn't mean to say you can't go, so those people keep in touch with people that we know.

Conclusion

Assumptions of power

As narrative researchers we believe in this document it is necessary to refrain from drawing research 'conclusions' in the traditional sense. In traditional research the voice of the researcher often swamps that of the respondent or the researched. The researcher describes, interprets and analyses the data to form a thesis of the area concerned. The researchers discourse controls and subjectifies the discourse of the researched. Thus the researched are often marginalised by the hegemonic power of the academic researcher. These criticisms were raised by Foucault (1972) who pointed out that discourses do not circulate freely and without limitation but are subjects of control and exclusion thus creating a dominant discourse that is imbued with power and power relations. However it is possible to contest dominant discourses by understanding that such viewings are imbued with power and as researchers we have the ability to not take this power but allow it to reside with the researched.

Friere (1972) further explored this concept of power imbalance highlighting the relationship of the researcher/educator to the researched/educated. He described traditional research/education as the 'banking approach'. By this he means that it is the researcher's/teacher's role to fill the researched/student with information - the researcher/teacher does not encourage critical analysis of that information but presents it as 'the truth. This can lead to a situation of adapting the subjects to fit the structures rather than in giving people the resources and information to critically analyse and challenge structures. In comparison the concept of 'libertarian education' draws on the experiences of both the researcher/teacher and the researched/students, allowing a situation where "[t]hey become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow." (Friere 1972:53) This style of research/education encourages the questioning of the systems that oppress the marginalised and seeks to find solutions to this power imbalance.

Therefore the format of this work allows the researched to tell their own stories free of researcher interpretation has ensured that we as researchers do not add our spin to the respondents voices and therefore we present them in an unadulterated manner. This conclusion therefore discusses how, through the use of narrative analysis, a pluralistic or multiple view of the community organisations studied can be explored.

The themes explored

The choice of a narrative approach allows the stories of the organisations to be presented here in an unadulterated form which recognises that they have the power of constructing their own discourse without interference or interpretation by the researcher.

The stories presented here highlight the steps that the organisations undertook and their rationale to overcome challenges and to maintain the operation of their services. While the lessons here are specific to each organisation it is intended that the reader engage with the stories using them as a source of experience, learning and inspiration.

What follows are some of the responses grouped according to the themes used to guide the interview process. As previously stated this is not intended to be a summary or analysis of the stories but is offered as one strand of the multiple perspectives that can be read from the stories contained here.

It is intended that readers will complete Czarniawska's process for narrative analysis by setting these stories against their own, deconstructing the ideas and shared histories so they can learn from the experiences storied here.

The five social service and community development organisations represent a long and rich heritage of community organising in Dunedin. They range from Anglican Family Care who had their beginnings during the early 1970's to the newest group, the Fernhill Community Group, who have been active since the late 1990's. The life history provides the linkage between the themes and provides a context of 'the times' that must be considered when reading the accomplishments and challenges of the organisations offered here. The life history provides the framework on which the other themes are built.

Themes

1. Changing community needs

“I think when you analyse why they are suffering that poverty it is because they have huge, huge debt...”

For the two social service organisations (Anglican Family Care and Arahina House) in this project there seems to be a growing complexity of need amongst their client groups. In addition these needs are becoming more serious and challenging for the organisations to respond to. These organisations have met these challenges by professionalising their services and employing trained staff. Those clients who need the most support are often hampered by rising levels of debt coupled with a lack of basic living skills.

The three community or neighbourhood organisations (Fernhill, Pasifica and St Kilda Community Club) report on their strengthened linkages with their communities and the influence that the successes that they have had over the years have brought their communities together. They comment that their true strength is their embeddedness in their community – they are the community. They see themselves as forming part of the glue that holds their community together. Such interaction builds inclusiveness and promotes an active sense of community.

Increasingly there are increasing differences between the social service orientated organisations and community or neighbourhood organisations. This is illustrated particularly in the narratives of Arahina House that in 2002 appeared to be a little of both, but in 2008 has moved more toward a service orientated model, even their name had changed from Arahina Community House to Arahina House. We suggest that a combination of changing needs and government funding priorities may be a catalyst for such changes (Aimers and Walker 2008).

2. Funding

“I’m quite fearful of the funding. It just ruins my life to be honest, it’s there the whole time”

Funding processes are time consuming both in arranging funding and in meeting reporting requirements. The larger organisations being supported by funding contracts from central government, the smaller by localised grants and community donations and subscriptions.

Anglican Family Care has, over the last few years, been successful in attracting ongoing government contracts for the range of work they engage in. This funding has been both a blessing and a curse with a large expansion in the operation but a highly dependent income source with 94% of their income coming from government contracts. Contract funding also leads to the inevitable round of audits which is very time consuming and to the writing of service specifications which accurately describe the tensions between policy makers at a national level and service delivery at the local.

For the smaller organisations funding is very difficult to come by with St Kilda Community Club seeking sponsorship to make up shortfalls or by retrenching some activities. Pasifica highlight the support they receive from the Community Trust which is pivotal for their operation as government funding becomes more tuned to social service provision and the achievement of specific outcomes to support government priorities.

Likewise Arahina struggle to make ends meet with a variety of funders supporting their activities that are not covered by government contracts. Funding priorities are raised as an issue with preventative community development work and health issues not being funded. Other issues are the increase in client load but no increase in funding so Arahina is doing more on less.

Fernhill rely on subscriptions from members and donations from the community and from the Dunedin City Council grants. Funding is mainly used to produce and distribute their community newsletter.

3. Internal Dynamics

“I thought that management and governance were just the labels but now I have very clear boundaries on where I work in and how I work.”

The way organisations have adapted the traditional committee structure to suit their own needs has been one of the most interesting observations for this project. A number of the organisations acknowledge that finding volunteers to hold positions of responsibility has become increasingly difficult since the beginning of the 1990s. In addition with the loss of key players some of the organisations have had to go back to basics and rebuild. This

is an influence on all the organisations studied but perhaps it has affected the St Kilda Community Club more than the other organisations. Another issue is the move towards 'pay to play' rather than in belonging to a club - and the issues involved in making the people who are users of the service, but not members, aware of the other club activities.

Other concerns raised are the reliance on volunteers to govern the organisations – this can become a burden especially as the activities become more wide ranging and complex and the client needs become more diverse. This increasing complexity has created a need for training regarding the tensions between governance and management with some of the organisations seeking such training to help them with these issues.

4. Links with other organisations

“It’s an excellent forum for networking and it’s great for me because I learn all the different services that are out there, what they do, who to contact, so that I’ve got someone to refer my clients to.”

Networking between organisations whether nationally, regionally or locally is seen by all the organisations as a way to improve information flow with their community, seeking other ways of working and support. This is achieved by individual contact between staff and governance of different organisations, regular meetings and joint projects. The links with other organisations within networks are seen as pivotal as they become strong supporters and advocates for the organisation.

Some of the networking is casual – day to day linkages, some is more formal with intentional networks established to act in a localised or theme specific grouping to support each other and to assist their clients obtain the most relevant service for their needs.

Another form of linkage reported is that between different branches of the same organisation. Each regional branch helping each other and forming an alliance across the whole South Island.

Final thoughts

The organisations highlighted in this study are diverse in size, ways of operation, funding, service delivery and activities however they share many similar constructs. Interestingly some of the biggest challenges for organisations have also been the catalyst for their greatest successes. Despite the effort required fundraising has undoubtedly brought benefits to all the organisations that have engaged in it. The role of local funding sources for the smaller organisations is highlighted as an alternative to the larger government contracts on offer if the organisations fit with those criteria.

This is not only a financial exercise but for many such as Pacifica and Arahina it has been an opportunity to build support, develop a sense of achievement, increase their profile or

educate the community. Anglican Family Care has been very successful in obtaining funding through government contracts but this expansion of its services has led to further challenges.

Despite increasing demands on leisure time the contribution of volunteers remains a significant resource without which much of the work described in these stories would not occur. Rather than prescribe to the notion that no one wants to volunteer anymore these stories illustrate different ways in which organisations have developed to maximise volunteer effort to where it is most effective. There is no recipe here, each solution is different but adaptation and problem solving have proved to be key. Successful organisations appear to be flexible, innovative and ready to use their members' skills where they will have most effect.

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