



Central Otago Welcoming Communities Stocktake Report 2022

The findings of the stocktake undertaken for the Welcoming Communities programme in Central Otago from August 2021-February 2022.

Central Otago Welcoming Communities Stocktake Report

March 2022

Purpose

The aim of the stocktake was to determine what welcoming activities, policies, programmes and services currently exist in Central Otago, and to enable analysis and benchmarking of the district against the eight outcome areas of the Welcoming Communities national standard. This report contains the analysis of the stock take, identifying areas of strength and opportunity, and will be used to shape the Welcoming Plan.

Scope

The scope of the stocktake included Council activities, policies, and community activities, programmes and services, as relates to welcoming newcomers. 'Newcomers' is defined as recent migrants (up to five years in New Zealand), former refugees and international students, as well as New Zealanders relocating to Central Otago. An activity, policy, programme or service was considered 'welcoming' if it related or contributed to one or more of the outcome areas of the standard.

Method

This stocktake was undertaken with a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative data collection such as semi-structured group discussion and one on one discussion, with quantitative data both from internal council sources and public consultation through the Welcoming Communities Advisory Group. A targeted Welcoming Communities Newcomer Survey is currently being conducted and data received from that consultation will be included in the Welcome Plan.

Qualitative data

- Semi-structured interviews with key representatives of community organisations and local government organisations identified as key stakeholders in welcoming newcomers (see appendix for list of stakeholders).
- CODC staff (community and engagement team, tourism, customer service, libraries, senior strategy advisor)
- Consultations with Welcoming Communities Advisory Group members
- Newcomers themselves (through Alexandra Cultural Diversity Group, Cromwell Newcomers, and ESOL Friday coffee group).

Quantative data

- 2018 Census
- Infometrics Data
- Horticulture & Viticulture Central Otago Labour Survey, November 2021
- Ministry of Education Education Counts Report, July 2021

Data collection commenced with an initial desk-top review of Central Otago District Council (CODC) policy, publications and internal statistics, discussions with Council Senior Strategy Advisor, as well as semi-structured consultations with key Council staff involved in community engagement.

In conjunction with this, further semi-structured interviews were held with key community group members working with newcomers, including education providers, leaders of community groups, and industry representatives.

Following these discussions, an Advisory Group was formed with membership from key community groups, industry representatives and individuals who are passionate about welcoming newcomers. This group provided unique insights about how each unique geographic area and different industry sector of the district approached newcomers.

Limitations

It is acknowledged that many of the critiques below are based on qualitative information, and conclusions are to be considered indicative only. Further investigation is recommended. Furthermore, due to the broad scope of the programme, together with the time restraints of the stocktake and availability of contributors, there are likely people or groups either involved with newcomers, or newcomers themselves who were not either not captured in this report or were unable to participate. Data collection is expected to be ongoing, as new people and groups become involved, and new perspectives and experiences are uncovered, which will be used to inform and guide the programme throughout.

Background & Context

Welcoming Communities Background

In November 2020, CODC submitted to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) an expression of interest to join the Welcoming Communities programme. In July 2021, MBIE confirmed that CODC was selected to join 14 other councils in the programme. The three-year commitment commenced in July 2021. A part time Welcoming Communities Officer was appointed to Council's Community and Engagement team Team in July. The Advisory Group was named on 26 November and on 13 December Council's Mayor and Chief Executive signed that Statement of Commitment at a ceremony held at the council courtyard.

Welcoming Communities brings together local government and community leaders to make the district more welcoming to newcomers by building better connections with the land and each other.

The Welcoming Communities programme recognises communities are healthier, happier and more productive when newcomers are welcomed and can participate fully in society and in the local economy. Welcoming Communities actively seeks to mobilise and involve members of the local communities in welcoming activities, along with newcomers. This approach promotes building strong connections to integrate these two groups together.

This programme is part of a global movement, originally developed as a response to the recent resurgence of anti-immigrant discourse, which aims to engage local communities to be purposefully welcoming to migrants. Other programmes include Cities of Migration, in Canada, Welcoming America, in the United States, and Australia's Welcoming Cities.

The local context

In Central Otago we are a unique group of people sparsely spread over a wide, remote rugged region. That sense of remoteness has shaped the way we live our lives. We are a collection of communities fiercely independent and competitive yet united in our love for Central Otago, its landscapes, people, climate, its stories and its vision. Each town or settlement is 'part of the sum'.

Across the district, agriculture plays an influential role in shaping the workforce. Agricultural sectors such as horticulture, viticulture and dairy farming employ large numbers of permanent and temporary migrant workers, as well as district locals. Tourism, construction, manufacturing and professional services are also important economic drivers in the district.

The ethnic mix of our district continues to grow, albeit at a slower pace than other parts of New Zealand. According to the 2018 census, 84 percent of the district residents were New Zealand born,

with 14 percent born overseas. Māori and Pasifika people make up a growing proportion of our population. Census statistics don't accurately take into account the presence of migrant workers who may not reside permanently in our district. Migrant groups who are represented in our district include those from Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Closed borders due to COVID-19 has reduced the flow of Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) and backpacker labour into New Zealand while demand for staff increased.

Ethnic groups for people in Central Otago District, 2006–18 Censuses

	2006 (%)	2013 (%)	2018 (%)
European	80.9	92.9	91.9
Māori	7.2	7.5	8.4
Pacific peoples	0.6	1.3	2.3
Asian	1.0	1.6	2.7
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	0.3	0.3	0.6
Other ethnicity	16.3	2.4	1.3

Other migrants to the district include new workers and their families, who come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and in line with national trends, are most likely to hold employment in healthcare, agriculture, hospitality and retail.

Infometrics Wellbeing Overview 2018

Higher scores indicate greater wellbeing outcomes and lower scores indicate lesser wellbeing outcomes.

Queenstown-Lakes District	Central Otago	Domain
62.3	86.3	Civic Engagement and Governance
61.1	50.2	Environment
87.2	57.8	Health
25.6	67.9	Housing
77.2	52.2	Income and Consumption
81.7	76.7	Jobs and Earnings
81.8	76.0	Knowledge and Skills
51.2	58.9	Safety
85.0	50.1	Social Connections

Challenges for the district include an aging population, with some areas experiencing stagnant or negative growth, juxtaposed against other areas of the district that are expanding at a rapid rate. The vast distance between communities, inconsistent Internet access and relatively small population pose additional hurdles for newcomers. When compared with our closest neighbour, Queenstown Lakes District, there are some weaknesses worth noting, in particular the low score residents give on social connections. However, Central Otago's strong commitment to civic engagement and governance are to be applauded. The Welcoming Communities programme aims to work closely with each community to develop strategies that suit their unique needs and address the factors that may contribute to newcomers feeling a sense of isolation. Building on existing initiatives and programmes in the district will be important as there is limited capacity. The key to success will be genuine and continued engagement with local communities to identify opportunities to help newcomers feel more included and want to happy to make Central Otago their home.

Findings

1) Inclusive leadership

1.1 As the indigenous peoples of New Zealand, Māori – represented by tangata whenua, mana whenua, iwi and hapū and/or other hāpori Māori – have a prominent role in Welcoming Plan activities.

The stocktake suggests that there is a need for the involvement of Māori in welcoming newcomers to the region as currently this is limited. Existing activities include a pōwhiri held at area high schools to welcome new arrivals and citizenship ceremonies held by the council.

This is an area of opportunity, and regular welcoming opportunities involving tangata whenua should be developed.

It is recognized that any involvement by Welcoming Communities must be led and defined by Māori. We are delighted that David Ellison, upoko (chief) of Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki, at Karitane, has agreed to be the Central Otago Welcoming Communities advisor.

1.2 Leaders – both designated and unofficial – reflect the diversity in the local community, as does the council workforce.

More detailed data regarding the Council internal workforce is currently being collected by Council's People & Culture team and will be available before the final draft of the Welcoming Plan. Findings suggest there is limited cultural diversity in leadership roles in the region, including community boards, elected members and board members of community organisations.

This was identified as an area of opportunity for Central Otago.

1.3 Leaders model the principle of inclusiveness, openness, tolerance, respect and acceptance of all cultures in the community.

The data gathered on this outcome area suggested that there is still a lot of work to be done by leaders to model and promote the positive benefits of cultural diversity in our region. However, there is support shown through being involved in citizenship ceremonies, messages given at public events, and through promotion of the Welcoming Communities programme.

1.4 There are clear roles, responsibilities and ownership within Council and in the wider community for the Welcoming Communities programme.

Whilst the programme is still in the early stages, it is evident that this outcome area is being achieved, with the appointment of a Council-based Welcoming Communities Officer to drive the programme, and the formation of a Council-led Advisory Group, consisting of community and stakeholder representatives, who have the task of guiding and shaping the programme.

1.5 Council internal and external policies, services, programmes and activities recognise and address cultural diversity.

A review of council policies has identified that cultural diversity is not specifically recognised and addressed. There are a number of options available to Council that warrant further investigation, including developing a policy or strategy dedicated to diversity, highlighting the presence of diversity in our community through imagery and communications, providing services that are sensitive to diverse cultural needs and documenting internal staffing decisions. These initiatives represent areas of opportunity in terms of driving positive outcomes for diversity, both internally (workforce composition, education, etc.) and externally (events, services etc.).

There is also a need to develop accessible information on cultural diversity in the district to ensure the Council staff are aware of the statistics and trends around cultural diversity and newcomers to build awareness in the wider organisation. An opportunity to be explored is the creation of an internal newcomer and cultural diversity group (self-selected) that would provide input on diversity policies and training, as well as provide support for one another.

Where it is apparent that Council is doing well is in its library programmes and activities offered to celebrate cultural diversity, such as the human library project, building the Te Reo collection and assisting seasonal staff with technology needs.

An opportunity to be explored is working to include "cultural diversity" in a community profiles project. This idea has been raised to highlight the contributions of migrants in the community and personalize their individual stories.

1.6 A range of leadership opportunities in the council and the wider community are available to and taken up by newcomers.

Leadership opportunities for newcomers are limited, with citizenship required to hold elected positions in local government. Access to leadership positions may be limited by lack of information about how to be involved or what the role will require. While leadership appears to be strong within some ethnic groups, their participation in leadership roles in councils and in the wider community appears very limited, particularly with newcomers. Mentoring was viewed as a good way to involve newcomers in leadership opportunities.

2) Welcoming Communications

2.1 The community is well informed about the local benefits of immigration and the Welcoming Communities programme, including success stories

Many mainstream media stories around migration into the region have focused on skill shortages and Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers in the region to support the economy.

With regards to success stories, it is evident that there are occasionally such narratives in the media; however, there is room for improvement in some of the framing of these stories, and their frequency.

Some comments and stories about the difficulties faced by newcomers in gaining employment suggest that there is a need for more information and education in the community, in particular the business community, about the benefits of immigration i.e. for the local labour market.

2.2 The council is well informed about newcomers to their region and pro-actively seeks data about newcomers from relevant sources

Council has used national data from Statistics New Zealand, MBIE, and Infometrics to identify demographics and labour market trends. Horticulture & Viticulture Central Otago Labour Survey, November 2021 and Ministry of Education, Education Counts Report, July 2021 provides more localized data to support informing who newcomers are in the region.

Realtors and property managers are often the first point of contact for newcomers and maintain records that will be useful in identifying housing trends. There is an opportunity to build rapport with this industry to remain abreast of the changing needs of new arrivals into the community.

In March 2022, a Welcoming Communities Newcomers Survey was developed and is currently open and feedback is being provided. The focus of the survey is to identify who the newcomers are in Central Otago, what their experiences have been and how we can make that transition easier.

2.3 The council's engagement with all residents is two-way, culturally appropriate and fit for purpose.

The Council's Welcoming Communities Officer is the lead role for fostering culturally appropriate engagement, with support from other staff such as the Communications Team.

Newcomers' interactions/touch points with council are many and varied (for example, use of the libraries, rubbish services, local elections) and many of interactions will not be with the Welcoming Communities Officer. As mentioned above, the stocktake has identified an opportunity for Council to develop an overarching strategy around diversity which may enhance the Council's approach across the organisation. The Communications Team has been actively producing videos and other creative means of communication to help bridge the gap between Council and the general public. In terms of fit for purpose, culturally appropriate engagement (for example, cultural intelligence around how best to communicate with different cultural groups, and knowledge of areas of importance for various groups to help shape consultation and engagement). There is an opportunity for the Council to further streamline interactions with mana whenua, Aukaha in particular. To this end, Council is currently engaging with Aukaha and has agreed to a draft protocol that provides a framework to establish an enduring partnership between Kāi Tahu, as represented by kā rūnaka and the Central Otago District Council, and for the operational interface with Aukaha Ltd.

Council has a Significance and Engagement Policy which provides guidance on when it is appropriate for the council to consult with the community and the method that is most appropriate for that engagement. That policy provides the framework for future community engagement.

2.4 Council communication materials and messages are inclusive and reflect the diversity of the local community. Council encourages other agencies, businesses and organisations to follow this model.

Council has had limited images of cultural diversity in communication materials, but recent steps have been made to increase stock images reflecting cultural diversity of the region that can be used in future publications and materials.

While there is an expressed desire for Council messages to be inclusive and reflect the diversity of the community, there is no overarching communications policy with regard to diversity.

Good feedback has been received regarding the messages promoted by Council. However, there is a common theme that council publications, website and materials can be hard to read for those with English as a second language and sometimes there is too much use of jargon and colloquialisms.

3) Equitable Access

3.1 Council partners with local businesses, organisations and sector to identify and address barriers for newcomers to accessing services and participating in the community.

Council is engaged in many partnerships to this effect and is making a significant positive impact across a range of groups, including: ESOL classes, as well as a programme to support new drivers (Drive My Life) offered by Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP); informal ESOL support provided by the Communication Language Group in Cromwell; and technology support courses offered by the library as well as the library's summer reading programme. Connected, a NZ government job training, employment and education programme, offers interview skills classes for newcomers and migrants to help them gain access to employment.

Council provides staff support for a Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) grant in the Teviot Valley to create community hubs and support the wellbeing of horticulture staff, many of whom are migrant seasonal employees.

There is an opportunity for a more regular and coordinated approach to identifying newcomer needs in the community. Establishing routine opportunities for newcomers to gather and support one another is a need that has been voiced. The extent to which our communities have a formalized process for welcoming newcomers varies widely.

A Welcoming Communities survey was developed to specifically identify the barriers for newcomers to accessing services and participating in the community.

3.2 Council and other organisations in the community research, design and deliver services that take account of the different circumstances (for example, rural/urban) and cultural backgrounds of all service users, including newcomers.

Services in Central Otago are stretched. The small population, spread over a large geographical area pose challenges that are not easily addressed. There is no public transportation and day-to-day basic needs such as grocery shopping and health care often require travel. However, social services networks are well-coordinated throughout the district and council service centres are placed in remote communities to ensure accessibility.

Further investigation is required into the research and design methods of community organizations working with newcomers.

3.3 All community members are well informed about the services available in the community. Newcomers are made aware of and are using these services.

Whilst there are many quality services available in the community for newcomers, the communication of what is available has been identified as an aspect where improvements can be made. A common theme amongst discussions has been the need for easier access to information on what

events/programmes/activities are occurring around the district, and what services are available for newcomers. Currently this information is not found in a single easily accessible location. Council is currently reviewing the current welcome brochure and anticipates an improved design, including an online component to be produced in the coming year. The Council has a partnership with the Central App, which is a regional resource that is used heavily in the district. The Central App currently provides a CODC button that links to Council services, and discussions are underway to consider creation of a newcomer button to help centralise newcomer information. In addition, the Central App routinely highlights council initiatives and programmes through their news articles. Increased marketing material and improving strategies for informing newcomers of opportunities is another area that was highlighted. Schools, churches and employers were seen as under-utilised gateways to share information with newcomers.

4) Connected and Inclusive Communities

4.1 Coordinated, comprehensive and appropriate initial welcoming support services are available from Council, other agencies and community organisations.

The evidence suggests that welcoming support services in Central Otago lack coordination both within communities and between communities. The comprehensiveness of those support services varies from one community to the next and would not be considered comprehensive.

Council is working to improve this by creating a welcome brochure that is easily found and identifies the key access points to find newcomer information. Currently that information is available through organisations such as Alexandra Citizens Advice Network, but it is a challenge to keep that information current. Accessibility of that information is another challenge.

The information gathered shows that migrants (workers and others) and newcomers to Central Otago experience little support, in terms of formal, comprehensive and coordinated programmes. This may be attributed to the fact that their arrival is usually not managed or associated with one particular organisation (as with students), and so it is harder to know who is arriving, and when, and it is less obvious who should provide the support.

One group that has been founded in recognition of this need is the Alexandra Cultural Diversity Group, which has been assisted in its development by the Council's community development programme. However, it is still in the establishment phase and thus there is room for the development of services in this space. It is also acknowledged that the Cultural Diversity Group does not cater for all newcomers (those who aren't culturally diverse). The Cromwell Newcomers Network specifically addresses the needs of all newcomers, not only those who come from another country. This is an effective model that should be considered duplicating in other population centres such as Alexandra. There is an opportunity to increase visibility and provide easier access to general support services, such as those offered by the Community Connectors, Citizens Advice Network, and health and education providers.

4.2 The receiving community is well equipped and supported to welcome and interact with newcomers.

There is a need for more information and resources for local residents and organisations to support, welcome and interact with newcomers. Knowledge about who newcomers are, cultural information and increased opportunities for connection or how they can be involved in welcoming initiatives appears to be limited.

4.3 Members of the receiving community and newcomers build relationships and are at ease with connecting and learning about and from each other.

The stocktake has established that, while locals in the district are perceived as friendly and welcoming, building deeper connections is difficult. Limited opportunities to build social connections, particularly in rural areas, lead newcomers to be susceptible to isolation in the community.

Cultural events in the district such as Ethnic Eats in Cromwell or Multicultural Potlucks in Alexandra were viewed as being attended mainly by members of the ethnic communities with limited attendance by local residents. Increased engagement of locals in these activities is needed. Activities for newcomers to learn about local history and kiwi culture were also viewed as important. Libraries may be viewed as a welcoming space for hosting social connections and intercultural engagement activities.

4.4 Different cultures are celebrated and people are supported to express their cultural beliefs and customs, including language and religious practices.

There are limited opportunities in Central Otago to celebrate cultural beliefs and customs. There has been interest in Diwali celebrations, but COVID has prevented those from taking place. Dunedin based Arasan NZ Trust has expressed an interest in supporting and promoting south Asian cultural events in smaller communities such as Alexandra and Cromwell. This opportunity is being explored further. The council supported a mural in Roxburgh, which aims to reflect the diversity of the community, including flora and fauna. The important role of the Chinese settlers in the area was honored with a Chinese-inspired border.

Council, with the support of Welcoming Communities, has begun encouraging international staff to invite the celebrate holidays that are important in their home country. The council also supports an internal newcomers and migrants peer support group. Both of these initiatives were started by Welcoming Communities but are expected to continue beyond the life of the Welcoming Communities programme.

5) Economic Development, Business and Employment

5.1 Newcomers, including international students, are supported to access local employment information, services and networks.

The stocktake has shown that there are services available in this area, such as Connected and Work Connect, which offer specific workshops to help migrants hone their interview skills and tailor their CVs for the New Zealand market. However it may still be difficult to bridge the gap as a newcomer into full, meaningful employment. There may also be limitations with regard to visa status as some services are only available to citizens and permanent residents. It appears that there are two key issues in this area: firstly, newcomers are initially unaware, or find it difficult to know where to find, services to help them into employment; secondly, feedback indicates that newcomers perceive some reluctance from employers to hire migrants, even when qualified for a position.

5.2 Newcomers, including international students, are supported with the local knowledge and skills to ensure they can operate successfully in the New Zealand work environment, either as a business owner or an employee.

Newcomers As an employee – see 5.1.

With regards to newcomers establishing businesses, there are limited services available in Central Otago apart from those offered by Business South, Inc. This stocktake has highlighted that newcomers may find it difficult to know about those services that do exist, and there may be a need for more

comprehensive support in some areas. Increased promotion of support services to new business owners would be valuable as the region can be a challenging environment for new business owners to thrive and migrants in particular can struggle in this area.

5.3 The receiving community recognises the value of diversity in the workplace, of newcomers' contribution to the region's growth and of the resulting wider economic benefits.

There have been messages for the receiving community via the media on the economic and social benefits of newcomers in the region, but those messages have not been consistent or coordinated. This report suggests that more could be done to grow an understanding of the value, including economic benefits, of diversity, for businesses and the regional economy. It is apparent that not enough is known in the wider community about how the success of our local labour market depends on migrant workers, currently and in the future.

5.4 Local employers and workforces develop their intercultural competency.

Intercultural training opportunities appear limited, and investigation into how to increase training opportunities would be valuable. The perception is that businesses often do not have time for training and having workshops may not be the best option. Instead, sharing information in existing business publications could be more valuable. It would be worthwhile to gauge the interest of employers in receiving this training and how they would like it offered.

There is an opportunity to showcase and share the best practices of key employers who are modelling successful cultural diversity in the workplace. There is an opportunity here to encourage business organisations to include diversity as an awards category at the Biennial Central Otago Awards.

5.5 Mutually beneficial connections and initiatives are set up with migrant businesspeople by local business community and professional networks.

There is evidence of such connections being established in Central Otago with the offer of Business South Inc. to provide a scholarship for one ethnic newcomer to attend their Leadership Academy. While this project is still in the development phase, the enthusiasm shown by Business South indicates their support for such initiatives.

6) Civic Engagement and Participation

6.1 The council's elected members and staff effectively communicate with newcomers to promote their engagement in local government processes.

The stocktake has established that the intent for such communication exists from Council elected members and staff, and there are some areas of success and others where improvement could be made. It will be worth considering a more comprehensive induction for new council members, highlighting the barriers that newcomers may experience in understanding and engaging in the local government process.

It has also been recognised that it may be beneficial for further consideration to be given to the mediums of communication being used, and of the past experiences of newcomers and perspectives they bring which may impact their understanding or willingness to engage in local government.

6.2 Newcomers are encouraged and enabled to get involved in local government and civil society.

A common theme in the feedback received throughout this stocktake has been that it is difficult for newcomers to access information regarding local government and civil society. Formal council processes are particularly hard to navigate. There are very limited civics education opportunities for adults in Central Otago. With a local election scheduled for October 2022, there may be opportunities for basic civics education offerings. If civics education opportunities are offered in the future, consideration should be given to how these opportunities are promoted and delivered.

In response to COVID, Council and community board meetings are streamed online. These meetings are typically difficult for many in the district to attend due to their location and time. While this technological adaptation is a first step, it remains a challenge for newcomers to be aware of this accessibility and have the knowledge necessary to benefit from the access to these meetings.

6.3 Newcomers' efforts and achievements in civic participation and community life are acknowledged and celebrated.

There is limited evidence of special celebration in this area, aside from citizenship ceremonies, which usually occur a significant time after arrival, when individuals normally no longer fall under the definition of newcomers.

Acknowledgement of achievements in civic participation and community life could be better achieved in the local media.

7) Welcoming Public Spaces

7.1 The design and operation of public spaces and facilities are culturally appropriate and reflect the diversity of the community

Information gathered regarding the public spaces of Central Otago has been largely positive, with facilities such as parks, the library, and community centres, being acknowledged as open, inclusive, accessible and welcoming for all. Some have commented on the need for public spaces to acknowledge the role that migrants have historically played in our communities, so that is an area that can be enhanced moving forward. One example of that in our community is the public art on Roxburgh's main street. This mural resulted from a series of community workshops and weaves together the many cultural influences from the past to the present in a beautiful, seamless way.

Other opportunities to explore include identification of iwi sights of significance to highlight the role of tangata whenua in our communities and special consideration given to diverse artists when planning art installations in public spaces.

The lack of public transportation district-wide places limits on those who are unable to drive, further exacerbating the feelings of isolation. It might be appropriate to investigate further the design of all public services from a newcomer perspective, to ensure these are fit for purpose for all.

While coastal beaches pose the most significant water safety concern according to Water Safety New Zealand's research in 2020, rivers, lakes and pools are also a concern. Otago accounts for 2.9 drowning fatalities per 100,000 people. Water sports and recreation play an important cultural role in many of our communities and newcomers are often encouraged to join in. Newcomers are often unaware of the dangers and risks associated with water recreation. Raising awareness for newcomers of the dangers of our rivers, lakes and pools should be considered.

7.2 Welcoming public spaces provide opportunities to build trust and relationships between newcomers.

Community spaces such as libraries and community centres can provide opportunities to build trust and relationships with newcomers. There are regular low-cost sporting opportunities, recreational and cultural activities, both within the schools and through community clubs, held in the public spaces of the district, including the parks, museums and libraries. Community groups regularly use public spaces to meet and hold their events. However, improving how information is given to newcomers about these activities is needed.

7.3 Public spaces and buildings create a sense of community ownership and inclusion for all, including newcomers.

Evidence suggests that the signage of our public spaces could be improved. While most park areas are well marked, sharing explanatory information, pictures and local history with visitors, others provide only the most basic information. Some feedback suggested that images and artworks included in public spaces and facilities could better reflect the diversity of the district, along with the use of community facilities such as galleries to host cultural exhibitions.

Welcoming multilingual signage in key community facilities such as libraries and community centres was also viewed as supporting engagement in public spaces and buildings. The Council has set the example by using Te Reo names and explanations of those names in English in conference rooms and other public spaces in the main Alexandra office.

There is an opportunity to develop more family-friendly initiatives to highlight key points of interest in the different communities in the district, such as iwi sites of significance, historical places that highlight the contributions of different ethnic groups and unique places that make the community special. Such activities, which are based in the public spaces of the district, are excellent builders of community, and are inclusive in that they are based on the common 'languages' of play, whilst also being offered in two written languages, English and Te Reo.

8) Culture and Identity

8.1 Receiving communities and newcomers share and celebrate their cultures with each other, facilitated by the council and others in the community.

Conversations with stakeholders reveal that there is a desire for more opportunities for newcomers and local residents to come together and share their cultures with each other. The Cromwell Newcomers Network has provided an ongoing outlet for sharing in cultural celebrations through a variety of programmes, including Ethnic Eats. The Alexandra Cultural Diversity Group has offered multicultural potlucks and other events that encourage the celebration and sharing of cultures with one another.

There is a lot of interest in multicultural events, especially surrounding food. One barrier to be considered is the small number of ethnic representation in the area and the burden such an event would place on such a small number of people. There may be future opportunities to engage with Arasan Trust, based in Dunedin, who have expressed an interest in supporting South Asian cultural events in smaller communities such as Alexandra and Cromwell.

Ethnic communities organise cultural activities, but they are attended within those communities themselves. Increased support for these loosely organised groups to widen engagement to include local residents is needed. Information on what public spaces are available, in addition to knowing how to access funding opportunities to build capacity so more people can attend would support this goal.

There may be an opportunity to encourage the exploration of international cuisine through the offering of cooking classes or sharing of recipes as a way of broadening exposure and introducing new cultural dishes.

8.2 Newcomers and the receiving community understand what values they each hold dear.

There are limited opportunities for newcomers to interact with local residents apart from day-to-day business transactions. There is a need to extend this to more personal and meaningful interactions. Newcomers have noted a desire for more information on Kiwi culture, slang and to better understand and communicate with locals. Creating opportunities to share information and learn about the nuances of Kiwi culture would be valuable. The lack of understanding of Te Reo and its casual use on TV and in conversations is a barrier. Without confidence in the pronunciation and meanings of Te Reo words and phrases, it contributes to further isolation. To that end, offering simple tips on a routine basis explaining commonly used words and phrases would help to connect newcomers with the receiving community.

The next step for Central Otago is to better define and understand its own identity and culture, borne of its history, unique characteristics, environment and demographics, in order to more easily share this with newcomers and more readily develop meaningful connections.

Conclusions

Elements of strength for Central Otago include 3) Equitable Access 6) Civic Engagement and Participation, and 7) Welcoming Public Spaces.

With regard to Equitable Access, the Council, along with a number of community groups, provide services that support newcomers and assist them in assimilating into the community.

With regard to Civic Engagement and Participation, the Infometrics wellbeing data shows confidence in the civic process and willingness to participate.

With regard to Public Spaces, real progress is being made to seek out opportunities to recognize and highlight the importance of tangata whenua and the contributions of ethnic migrants. A good example of this is the mural in Roxburgh that represented the influence of different cultures from the past to the present in the Teviot Valley. The main objective of this project was to bring the different cultures together. While there are opportunities to improve, Equitable Access, Civic Engagement and Participation, and Welcoming Spaces are areas of strength for Central Otago.

Areas that have been identified as requiring more attention include 1) Inclusive Leadership, 2) Welcoming Communications, 4) Connected and Inclusive Communities, 5) Economic Development, and Business and Employment. While good work is being done in each of these areas, they represent those which require the most attention in the future.

Recommendations

This report recommends the Central Otago District Council work with community stakeholders, Advisory Group and individual newcomers to develop an action plan (the Welcome Plan) which focuses on and prioritises the areas of opportunity identified above: 1) Inclusive Leadership, 2) Welcoming Communications, 4) Connected and Inclusive Communities, 5) Economic Development,

Business and Employment and 6) Civic Engagement and Participation. In development of the Plan, consideration should also be given to those outcome areas which have been identified as needing further research or investigation.

Appendix

List of community stakeholders:

- Welcoming Communities Advisory Group
- Alexandra Cultural Diversity Group
- Operation Cromwell Harvest
- Cromwell Collective
- Connect Cromwell
- Cromwell Newcomers Network
- Alexandra Council of Social Services (ACOSS)
- Maniototo Social Services Network
- Uruuruwhenua Health
- Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP)
- The Learning Hub (Otago Polytech & REAP)
- Community Connectors
- Alexandra Citizens Advice Network (ACAN)
- Dunstan High School Social Studies Department
- Roxburgh Area School
- Cromwell Business Network
- Teviot Valley Business Breakfast Meeting
- Maniototo Business Breakfast Meeting
- Alexandra Business Breakfast Meeting
- Puna Rangatahi
- Alexandra Youth Council
- Cromwell Youth Trust
- Cromwell Youth Council
- Aukaha
- Community Connectors
- Alexandra Citizens Advice Network (ACAN)
- iSite in Roxburgh, Ranfurly & Cromwell
- Alexandra Information Centre
- Vakameasina
- Seasonal Solutions
- Summerfruit NZ
- Volunteer South
- WellSouth
- St. John The Baptist Catholic Church, Alexandra
- Filipino Community of Central Otago
- Arasan Trust NZ
- Central Otago Age Concern
- Alexandra/Clyde Neighbourhood Support
- Keep Alexandra/Clyde Beautiful