



Growing Confident Communities Together



Our passionate community member, Saed of NZ Al Najashi

In November 2011 the Migrant Action Trust organized the Growing Confident Communities Together Forum which was held at Mt. Roskill Youth Zone. The forum discussed issues affecting youth and youth unemployment in the Mt. Roskill area. The solutions suggested by the participants were discussed at a follow-up forum held on 5 May 2012. This newsletter is a report on that forum. The key theme for the forum was "puzzle" because each piece of a puzzle represents a solution that we possess individually but all the other pieces have to be put together in order for the puzzle to be complete.

Why our local MPs were puzzled ... missing link.

The Migrant Action Trust's work with communities confirms that marginalisation due to socio-economic exclusion is one of the root causes of crisis that our young people face. Economic participation is key to migrants and refugee settling successful and currently they are deprived of the opportunity to contribute to society.

The social costs of unemployment among the young people in Mt. Roskill have included, among other things, crime, insecurity and disengaged youth. The Government's recent aggressive measures on cost cutting has had a profound effect on migrants and refugees as they bear the brunt of unemployment. The unemployment rate for young people in New Zealand has in-

creased to 45%, further affecting disadvantaged youth who are at the risk of social exclusion. We are blessed to have a high number of youth who are energetic, full of aspirations and are ready to shape their own destinies. We are taking responsibility for supporting and guiding our Mt. Roskill youth to take their place in the community. We are taking action into our own hands and leading the way in solving the puzzle.

We know what is and what is not working and this is why we invited the Puketapapa Local Board and the representatives of central government to do their part by committing themselves to support our initiatives. (We are not putting our hands out but putting our hands up).

The communities joining together to form the puzzle left out one puzzle that formed an important link which is required to complete the puzzle. The role of the Local Board and the government in supporting the community initiatives is key to sustainability. The initiative is not a

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Views of our local MPs and local board on our issues

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Our Roskill Kaumatua, Tame Cassidy (left) and Richard Barter (Secretary, Migrant Action Trust).



Anthony Backhouse - I Have A Dream during the interview session.

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replacement of public services but an innovative response to community needs at the grassroots level.

During the Forum we pointed out what was not working, and provided evidence, including statistics to support our arguments. We not only presented the problems and issues but also presented our local solutions to youth unemployment.

We are asking for commitment and support in the following areas:

1. Nurturing business ideas where young people will turn their ideas into realistic opportunities
2. Support for community social enterprises
3. Neighborhood center.

The government and the market is limited in meeting the economic needs of the people especially employment. Youth enterprise and community social enterprise is a two pronged approach in addressing unemployment within the migrants and refugee communities.

This social economy is geared towards employment creation, service improvement and local development of Mt. Roskill.

The community enterprise will assist mature workforce both skilled and unskilled within the individual community groups. The focus is for every community to determine their own social enterprise that will employ their members who are unemployed. It's aim is to allow easy access into labor market and break all the barriers that locks them out of employment.

The youth enterprise will target the youth who are disengaged due to lack of jobs and are at the risk of social exclusion. The youth possess a passion that can be tapped and encouraged to work on real social challenges through internal empowerment.

These initiatives will help address the economic crisis through development of enterprises.

The second part of presentation was followed by activity where the local board, MPs, and representatives worked together with local youth and community leaders. They deliberated on the following questions:

1. What are the key messages you took from the youth presentation.
2. As a representative what can you do to support this initiative.

The rationale behind this activity was to allow the Local MPs interact with the community, make them visible and approachable. The activity was to foster interaction and have public sector input in a community level. An engaged public sector is a precondition for sustainability of such community initiatives.

Creation of interrelationships is key to addressing gaps and development of natural interest that complements the proposed interventions and strategies.

There was six representatives that was attached to different groups

namely:

- Julie Fairey - Puketapapa Local Board,
- Veronica Henare - representative of Dr. Pita R. Sharples, co-leader of the Maori Party and the minister of Maori Affairs,
- Dr. Jackie Blue - National Party List MP for Mt. Roskill ,
- Hon. Phil Goff - Labour Party MP for Mt. Roskill,
- Su'a William Sio – Labour MP for Mangere
- Melissa Lee - National List MP.

They were given time to discuss the questions face-to-face with a mix of youth and community leaders. They were then asked to give feedback on these questions and here is what they had to say to the youth and their community leaders.



Bob Hu from the Auckland Central Chinese Association

Youth Forum Posters.

What is not working in youth employment?

- Youth projects without youth inputs
- Low wages
- Local training/counselors not there locally
- Short-term funded projects for generational problems
- Skills training not preparing us for employment
- Skills training not responsive to business
- Sub-standard courses for international students

- International students exploited
- Disconnectedness in the community still persists.
- Discrimination of unemployed, low income-families and migrants.



Recommended solutions from the community

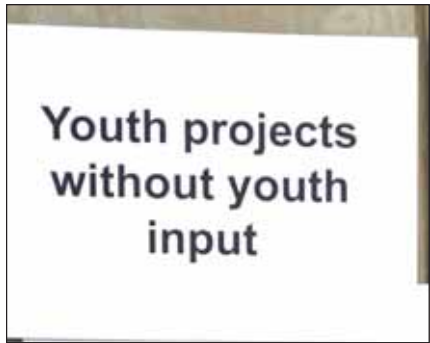
- Nurture business ideas
- Support community social enterprise
- Localised and multi-skills training
- Neighborhood not just community centers
- Long-term funding for long-term issues
- Holistic/ wrap around programmes, not compartmentalized
- Fair and just immigration policies.



The real challenge is that people want to work but there are no jobs.

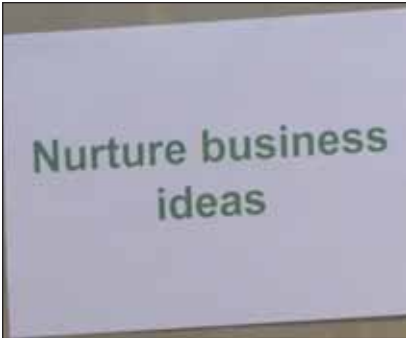


The messages in these posters formed the basis of Youth Forum discussions. The different representatives present at the Forum were to identify the key message from the presentations and state what they can do in their capacities to support the initiative.



Evidence to show that it is not working.

- 45% of unemployed is youth
- 22% of children living in poverty
- \$529.4million spent on youth opportunity packages.
- Exodus of both young and old to Australia.



Homegrown support - Puketapapa Local Board.



Julie Fairey, Puketapapa Local Board

Julie Fairey took the stage as a representative of the Puketapapa Local Board. The key message she took from the Forum was " We want to work but there are no jobs".

Her responses to the issues raised included her belief that current skills and courses are not responsive to business and she related this to her personal experience when she was navigating her career as a young person.

She condemned substandard courses that are not helpful in helping people get appropriate jobs. She added that although there is a need to offer career support services like CV writing etc, there needs to be a balance between practical work and theory in high schools and universities.

Julie said that, one of the key area that the Local Board would to offer to commit to and support is the ' Youth Connections" programme which is funded by Tindall Foundation. This is based on the *Mayoral Taskforce for Jobs* model. Its focus is youth employment and the engagement of local communities.

This is timely for the *Growing Confident Communities Together* initiative since one of the key message was, " We want to work but where are the jobs".

Creation of job opportunities is the key to getting our youth into labour market and giving them an opportunity to experience a sense of purpose and contribute to the economy.

Tangata Whenua support.

Veronica Henare represented the office of Hon. Dr. Pita R. Sharples, co-leader of the Maori Party and the Minister of Maori Affairs. She started by sharing her view that the messages presented during the Forum are general and not necessarily specific to migrants.

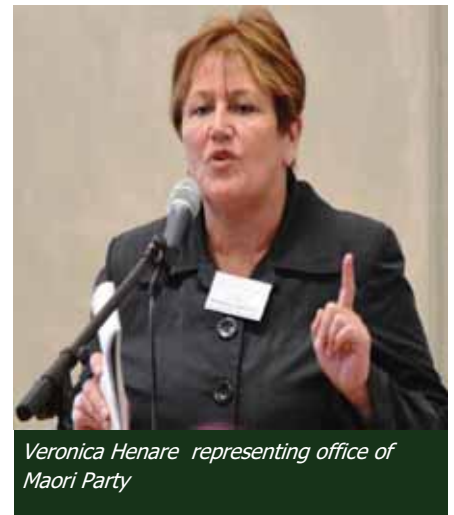
She added that lack of networking is a problem due to absence of information house that will form an action point

for networking.

She offered two solution to the issues raised:

1. Early intervention 1 - Provision of leadership in delivering skills to the youth in the school curriculum. She cited examples of what basic employment skills are required and also suggested the restoring of apprenticeship system.
2. Early intervention 2 - NZQA standards to be monitored in the international schools.

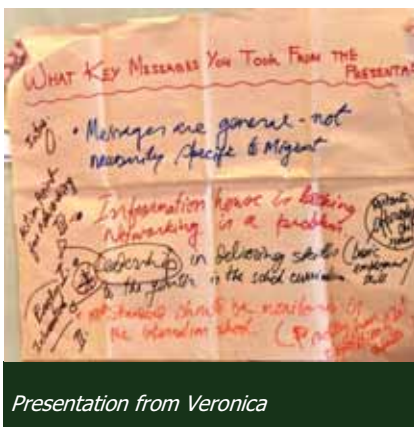
Veronica raised her concern about international students who have fallen prey to profit-making education providers. The marketing aspect of promoting New Zealand abroad to potential students and skilled migrants is not balanced. According to immigration statistics 31% of fee paying international stu-



Veronica Henare representing office of Maori Party

dents go on to work or apply for permanent residence in New Zealand after finishing their study.

Veronica promised to take the issues raised during the youth Forum back to Minister. We are awaiting feedback from the office.



Presentation from Veronica

National Speaks.



Dr. Jackie Blue, List MP, National Party

The message that Dr. Jackie Blue, the National Party List MP for Mt. Roskill, got from the Forum was the plight of international students who are exploited for profit. She reiterated that the education sector is a source of income to the government and promised to take the matter up with the minister.

She acknowledged that having English as a second language creates barriers to meaningful employment for migrants and refugees. The disadvantages youth despite the fact that they want to work.

In addition, she agreed that a lack of local experience is a major hindrance to gaining entry to the labour market. Dr. Blue supported the idea

of voluntary work experience and gave the example of Auckland Regional Migrant Settlement (ARMS) model where skilled migrants are offered work experience in administration roles. However, it is a challenge for migrants and refugees' to get work experience that is relevant to their skills.

Dr. Blue mentioned the Trade Academies introduced by the Government that focus on trade and technology in secondary schools and help young New Zealanders get relevant skills. The desired outcome is to keep them engaged in schools and provide a clear career pathways.

Labour Speaks.

For our very own local MP, Hon. Phil Goff from the Labour Party, the key message from the Forum was "We want to work but where are the jobs?". He agreed that there no jobs and cited the statistics that show that unemployment is up by 8% Maori make up 14%, Pacific 16% while Asians unemployment has hit 9.5%. He stressed that there is a shortage of job markets and only 25% of jobs are advertised.

Mr. Goff said New Zealand is a small economy so the key solution is to create high value products and services that can be exported. He urged that there is a need for to make the economy perform by investing in small businesses.

In New Zealand 87% of businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and employs 1

to 20 staff. The staff in SMEs that employ fewer than 5 are mainly family members.

He advised migrants and refugees to create a network within themselves as very few jobs are advertised. This becomes a link getting the jobs that are not advertised.

He emphasised that youth need to be supported when choosing a career or gateway and said that no youth should be allowed to leave school until they have chosen a career.

Other issues included, making sure that the right skills are learned and are relevant to business demands and economic needs. Matching the right job with the right skills is very important to migrants and refugees as they are already disadvantaged by their lack of local experience.



Hon Phil Goff, MP for Mt. Roskill, Labour Party

Labour Party Perspective.



Su'a William Sio, MP for Mangere, Labour Party

Su'a William is the Labour MP for Mangere and the key message he took from the Forum is 'We want to work but where are the jobs?'. He began by citing the youth unemployment statistics of 45%, with a total of 87,000 NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and acknowledged the current brain drain (young people moving to Australia and other countries).

He touched on the issue of low wages and mentioned that 22% of New Zealand children are living in poverty. Family income have dropped by 4.7% in the last two years. People on the minimum wage spend a higher proportion on the

basic needs like food, power, rent etc. He added that the current wage has failed to address income inequality.

His solution to the issues raised was to adopt an investment approach to youth, education and training, apprenticeships and support of business initiatives.

In addition, he emphasised the growth the of economy through supporting export industries and incentives, especially tax incentives for businesses. He reiterated the need to create more opportunities for young people to work and contribute to the economy.

Government's Response.



Melissa Lee, List MP, National Party

Melissa Lee is a National List MP and she remained true to the Government's stand towards youth related issues and unemployment.

The message she took from the Forum was the plight of international students. Her response was to cite the buyer "buyer beware". The buyer should do their homework before purchasing ser-

vices, in this case international students. The education sector is ranked the 5th largest export market with \$2.3 billion yearly. This means the government is attracting fee paying students to New Zealand.

The second message from Melissa was that the government does not have money.

According to Immigration New Zealand one in four New Zealander workers are migrants, Migrants provide a net fiscal contribution to NZ of \$3.3 billion while NZ born contributed \$2.8 billion. Migrants contributed 25% of government revenue and accounted for 18% of government expenditure.

Migrants contributed 25 percent of government revenue and accounted for 18 percent of government expenditure. (Statistics from Immigration NZ- 2010) We attended the Forum expecting we will be heard. We have young people want-

ing to work and contribute meaningfully to the community and New Zealand economy. This initiative creates a bridge between high national level policies and community initiatives whereby unmet needs are addressed at the local level and can make a difference and have an impact in the lives of those we work with.



Abhishek, an international student.

Our Roskill.



Elias Balcha of Auckland Refugee Coalition

The second part of the Forum was a discussion of ways we could strengthen our relationships and continue to work together. We had a puzzle activity that posed the question "what personal power do you have to contribute to *Growing Confident Communities Together?*". The participant were given puzzle pieces and asked to write on the back of the pieces and then put them together to make a whole puzzle.

This was symbolic as each puzzle piece represented each one of us and we can only form a complete puzzle by coming together - sum of the total is greater than the parts.

The responses were overwhelming . as the participants volunteered their expertise, experiences, time and talents to support the initiative. This is what they wrote in their feedback.

1. Advocacy role – advocate for local business to employ local people, looking for ways to get work experience, Her personal power is ability and opportunity

to think strategically, to plan and advocate for positive changes. Plus my capacity to organize some of these changes myself with others in our community (Julie Fairey).

2. Provide resources required to community groups, cultural perspective, reaching youth, advocacy and network, share experience, community link and umbrella (ARCC) (Aklilu Hibtit).

3. To take my role in the community by being a responsible citizen that does his role, working and educate myself and others, advocate peace, education and strong community (Liban Ahmed).

4. We provide chances for foreign businessmen to invest money in New Zealand to create more jobs (Bob Hu).

5. I represent our young people youth group, I want to be the voice to my community, I want to lead the next step for people, link, helping and showing other people how to find jobs (Elisane Pouono).

6. Confidence in oneself, plan short and long term, honest in your work, search and participate in wider network, good listening, patient to different ideas and cultures is good in building bridges to work with other communities (Saed).

7. Love teaching, work well with young people, positive attitude determined, reliable, punctual, confidence, patient and always happy (Haileab).

8. I understand community need, believe in community development approach and communities, am an enabler and can build leadership attitude, good teacher, understand communities and cultures and enjoy diversity (Roger Earp).

9. Positive attitude, listen to their potential, love them, show the right Path, share their thoughts, make them feel great, care for elderly, love the kids, they are our future (Arvinder).

These are a few samples of the comments from the participants and all the feedback has not been captured. We appreciate and acknowledge every participant's input during the Forum.

This is how we invest in the community— start young.



Our budding leader Khalifa Alamin from NZ Al Najashi Trust.

We came together and look at what we made as a community.



The end of the Forum made us feel part of a beautiful puzzle with all the flavors from every participant. Taken together, it forms one big puzzle that will provide a strong bedrock upon which Mt. Roskill community will be built.

We can say we are internally focused and relationship driven and that is why we have been advocating for a neighborhood centre.

Neighborhood centre - a people place! That is all we are asking for. We would like to have a community centre that is open and welcoming to all, rather than having to hire a venue.

The existing community spaces are predominantly economic in nature and so lack a real human touch that brings out a sense of community identity.

1. One of the major problem within Mt. Roskill is community disconnectedness and having the neighbourhood centre will help in two ways: Reduce isolation in the local community

and improve social networks.

2. Promote a sense of belonging and community spirit.

Building a stronger community is a key to addressing isolation in Mt. Roskill and building a strong community. A place where people come together and link into their communities and enhance opportunities for social connections.

We envision a neighborhood centre with an open door policy where all community members are welcomed and treated equally and with respect.

This will have broader community benefit and will promote stronger communities. This will also go along way in supporting relationships within the diverse community of Mt. Roskill and improving social cohesion.

May Road School Community.



Children from May Road school performing during the Forum.

The Migrant Action Trust acknowledge the support of the parents and the work of May Road School for their participation in all our Forums. We are learning together - school and community, where this forms a mutual beneficial relationship and rich fabric of positive stories that defines us as Mt. Roskill community.

What a privilege and honor to have the young ones participate in our Forum. We thank Principal Lynda Stewart for sacrificing her Saturday to accompany the children.

In particular, we thank Vasa Key for being instrumental in making it happen and always ready to contribute to the well being of the Mt.

Roskill community. What a dedication from a mother, a teacher and a community member.



Vasa Key, May Road School.