

## **Realising the Potential of the Community Outcomes Process**

**The following is a synopsis of a report prepared by MDL for Local Government New Zealand and a group of co-funders and launched at LGNZ's national council meeting in March 2005.**

The report makes the case that the real potential of the community outcomes process is as community based strategic planning. In doing so, it draws extensively on both New Zealand and international experience.

It sets this in the wider context of the changing nature of governance as effective influence shifts from the centre to regions and localities, a trend driven by a mix of factors including the complexity of the issues facing modern governments, and the impacts of globalisation.

As well, it identifies barriers that need to be overcome to make the community outcomes process truly effective. These include raising public (and local government) understanding of the process, developing capability, especially in strategic thinking, and managing the significant cultural change that will be necessary to achieve a shift from a consultation culture to a facilitation culture.

It clarifies the current confusion over the respective roles of community outcomes and the long term council community plan and emphasises the crucial importance of securing effective engagement from a wide range of stakeholders.

Its key findings conclude with the recognition that, if the community outcomes process is to realise its potential, all participants will need to focus on ensuring that, whatever process they use, it:

- Enables strategic thinking rather than inhibits it from an over-emphasis on process.
- Emphasises that the process belongs to the community and not to any one stakeholder or group of stakeholders.
- Accepts that, whilst improving "business as usual" is an important part of the outcomes process, the real gains will come as it enables strategic breakthroughs – quantum shifts in performance in promoting one or more of economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing.