Developing Community Recreation

New Zealand Recreation Association

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Background

NZRA are supporting the development of a strategy to develop community recreation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In late 2006 a group of interested people gathered in Auckland to discuss the lack of cohesion and shared understanding of community recreation in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As a result of this meeting, further work was done resulting in a proposal to the NZRA Board to support the development of community recreation, alongside its existing support and development of Aquatics and Open Space/Parks. A workshop at the NZRA conference helped to identify the beginnings of this development plan.

What does it provide?

The community recreation strategy provides:

- A clear sense of the sector, its boundaries, the participants, leaders and facilitators;

- The key elements and values of community recreation;

- Strategic direction for NZRA including the scope of its role;

- Interventions that engage parties beyond NZRA, with whom NZRA might share a leadership role; and

- A programme of initiatives for NZRA implementation.

The process of development

During the process to date we have been building a clearer and shared understanding about what is meant by "community recreation".

The multiple meanings of community recreation (as a process, a locus for service delivery, a type of activity) have room to create further confusion.

The process of developing the community recreation strategy addresses these differences, and finds shared ways of moving forward.

The overlap between community recreation and work being carried out by other government sectors has also been identified.

Community recreation is

Community Recreation is a process by which communities identify their own recreation issues, interests and needs and are actively involved in developing outcomes and taking action in ways that support their well-being and celebrate their identity.

This document

Based on research, discussions, feedback on previous drafts and the workshop, this document describes the values, processes and contexts of this work.

The priority actions are included in the following plan that describes NZRA's role and priorities.

Strategic Plan for Community Recreation

Vision	A civil society[1] in which all people are actively engaged and able to meet their own needs and aspirations as individuals, yet have a sense of themselves as active participants in a vibrant, dynamic, diverse society. Community recreation is recognised and appropriately supported as a major contributing force to this civil society.

Mission Statement	As recreation professionals working across the board, we want to articulate the values, processes and outcomes of community recreation to create full understanding of the contribution of this process to a civil society. We will do this by: Creating a shared vision; Forging links with other sectors whose work overlaps with our own; Championing the cause of community recreation; Recognising it where and when it is happening; Building our own capacity as practitioners.

Mission Statement

As recreation professionals working across the board, we want to articulate the values, processes and outcomes of community recreation to create full understanding of the contribution of this process to a civil society.

We will do this by

- Creating a shared vision,
- Forging links with other sectors whose work overlaps with our own,
- Championing the cause of community recreation,
- Recognising it where and when it is happening
- Building our own capacity as practitioners.

Strategies

- Develop a shared vision and philosophy of community recreation
- Key stakeholders and other influencers champion community recreation at all levels
- Develop professional practice and career paths within the community recreation sector
- Monitor and evaluate

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[1]Civil society is essentially *collective*, *creative*, and *values-based* action around shared interests, purposes and values that centre on a "good" society. Recreation, through its very nature, is therefore a key contributor to developing and enhancing 'civil society'. With reference to the Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics, Michael Edwards and Gareth Moore-Jones.

Values	Community recreation has the following core values: • Self determination of priorities, processes and outcomes • The process includes action-reflection[2] • Emphasis is on collective not individual action • Change is supported so it is sustainable and can be maintained • The fact and impact of inequality in society is recognised in the processes	Process	Community Recreation can be a means to an end or might be the end in itself It meets the needs of citizens in a way that invites involvement, participation, feedback and the realisation of individual and group goals. It is participatory, accessible and by its nature empowering.

Outcomes

The numerous possible outcomes reflect the needs, aspirations and values of the people involved and can include:

Collective development

- Building a civil society

- Builds social networks and a 'sense of belonging'

- Builds social capacity, capability and cohesion

- Sustainable action

Individual development

- Changed perceptions (self and others)

- Increased engagement – with others, with leisure activity, with the environment

- Experiences that form the basis for a lifetime of knowledge and participation

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[2] With reference to Munford, R. and Walsh-Tapiata, W. (2001) (3rd Ed) Strategies for change, community development in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Massey University, Palmerston North.

Strategy One: Develop a shared vision and philosophy of community recreation		
Goals	**Actions (short, medium, long term)**	**Outcomes**
• Establish advisory group to develop over-arching philosophy of Community Recreation • Develop and strengthen networks between people facilitating Community Recreation	• Continue momentum with existing NZRA members and sectors about community recreation and its connection, intersection and influence • Clearly articulated and consistent message throughout NZRA and its membership • Build bridges between 'them and us' through the use of common terminology • Promote community recreation values and processes to voluntary community leaders • Promote value of recreation participation as being part of civil society	• Recognised by recreation people as the 'reason' why recreation settings exist • A shared vision, shared language, terminology and agreed meanings. (resulting from collaboration) • Community Recreation words would be commonplace with an accepted meaning and understanding • Recognition by individuals that participation in socially acceptable recreation us contributing to civil society

Strategy Two: Key stakeholders and other influencers champion community recreation at all levels		
Goals	**Actions**	**Outcomes**

• Promote policy development and advocacy
 	
• Achieve acceptance of the purpose, principles and processes at highest levels
 	
• Articulate the benefits in ways which are clearly understood by many people at many levels
	• Identification of organisations and individuals who should be involved locally
	
	• Strong advocacy internal, external, and interagency: NZRA advocating about the impact of community recreation through papers, presentations, workshops, case studies, award nominations
	
	• Create social marketing based on development of a community recreation 'image' that can be aligned to facilities, programmes, services
	
	• Examine central government priorities, funding and policies, and look for the confluence with community recreation and local delivery
		• Champions of community recreation clearly articulating output and outcome statements
		
		• Image that 'says' community recreation
		
		• Visible on Council and Central Govt agendas/priorities
		
		• Identification of models and structures (public/NGO/private)
		
		• Community recreation is recognised as a powerful process in creating civil society and as such is:
		
		   • Appropriately supported
		
		   • Visible
		
		   • Inherent in central, local govt and NGO processes
		
		   • Recognised by individuals and groups as a process involving personal contribution.

Strategy Three: Develop professional practice and career paths within the community recreation sector		
Goals	**Actions**	**Outcomes**
• Develop career paths within community recreation • Develop an ongoing programme of professional development within the sector, with links to tertiary institutions	• Support ongoing development of community recreation personnel through NZRA facilitated professional development and in conjunction with SFRITO • Celebrate leadership and showcase role models; share best practice • Recognise innovation and collaboration	• The purpose, processes and principles of community recreation widely understood • Valued profession, careers and qualifications • Increased professional development in Community Recreation • Recognition of achievements in any aspects of community recreation through professional awards • Capacity and capability built
• Strengthen the identity and voice of the community recreation sector	• Encourage research and publications on Community Recreation within the recreation and other sectors	• Publications and research papers available; on-going discussion/debate relating to community recreation in action • Tertiary study path in community recreation available and attracting committed students

Strategy Four: Monitor and evaluate		
Goals	**Actions**	**Outcomes**
• Develop a process for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy	• Selection of appropriate and manageable monitoring process • Establish time period; who responsible for carrying out; and how results will be shared	• Progress is determined against the identified goals
	• Develop evaluation process to justify development of community recreation sector • Develop tools for monitoring progress (Are we making a difference? How can we demonstrate this?)	• Evaluation results identify which elements of the strategy have been most or least effective and guides future development of community recreation within the recreation sector.
	• Use community frameworks and indicators as the basis of evaluation (action-reflection, social capacity, community connectedness)	• Monitoring and evaluation contributes to ongoing development

Community recreation in context

Introduction

To talk about community recreation in useful and productive ways, we need to have a shared understanding of the underpinning concepts, processes, and values as well as an appreciation of the participants, leaders and facilitators. The multiple meanings of community can confuse any discussions – community recreation - a process, a locus for service delivery and a type of activity.

This document provides a summary of what "community recreation" is, what it looks like in practice, where it overlaps with other sectors, and who the people "working in" community recreation are likely to be.

Defining Community Recreation: Principles in Action

For an agreed definition of community recreation, the following key elements need to be in place including:

- core values that recognise recreation and leisure as human rights
- varied outcomes that reflect people's needs, values and aspirations
- person-centred process concerned with *self-determination (tino rangatiratanga)*
- commitment to sustainable development and change based on collective rather than individual action
- the use of action-reflection processes.

Where and when community recreation is happening

Community recreation is *a process that is set in motion* around a core set of principles, and in that sense it can occur in a number of settings, but is not necessarily always occurring in those settings.

Close examination reveals that where we find the relevant *principles in action*, community recreation is occurring, and it cannot be defined merely in terms of listing possible settings.

The community recreation process occurs across settings, and across work (or provider) sectors, as it is a process rather than an outcome. Cross-sectoral overlap includes arts, health and disability services, recreation and sports, Out of School Care programmes, iwi organisations, and many central and local government and non-government organisations and services.

Community recreation: defining boundaries and intersections

Community recreation *has much in common* with other sectors and disciplines where processes are based on the principle of self-empowerment; people taking control of their own wellbeing in the ways that suit them best.

Equally important in thinking about where and when community recreation occurs, is consideration of provision: places and spaces where people can participate in leisure experiences.   Without access to public indoor and outdoor spaces, the range of opportunities for self-expression would be limited indeed.

In the table on the following page, some of the elements community recreation has *in common* with other sectors are identified. Only some groups and organisations in this sector have a structure and set of guiding principles that allows for and supports community recreation in action. In fact, because community recreation is focussed on *process* the list is potentially exhaustive. This list explores some of the more obvious overlaps. We also need to acknowledge that the increasing shift in society towards notions of consumerism and opportunities to pay for play have increased the role of the private sector.

Community recreation – examples of connection

Overlap of community recreation with other sectors/disciplines					
Community Arts (eg dance, visual arts, music)	*Volunteering*	*Conservation, public, open space management and planning*	*Adult Education Continuing Education*	*Private sector provision*	*Health*
Self-expression is key to all of these. The opportunity and skill base to be able to participate links with key elements in the community recreation experience	Active participation in the leadership of communities, groups and organisations and social clusters	Provision of outdoor places and spaces where people can 'recreate' e.g. parks, pools, mountain tracks, rivers, lakes, oceans, beaches. Community recreation happens in many settings, at many times, with individuals or groups participating	Opportunities to explore and learn new activities as adults, and to connect with others with a similar interest are provided through the Adult and Community Education programmes	Creation of recreation opportunities by private providers that reflect the principles of the Community Recreation strategy. This includes pay for play.	When successful community recreation improves health, wellbeing and connectedness of the participants (a key goal for good health promotion practice). It encourages (and supports) people to take control of their own lives by defining themselves via leisure experiences

Community Service Groups			*Disability Services*
Belonging to clubs and groups builds a sense of community. Many of these groups provide recreation services to members and to the wider community. For example, Bridge Club, RSA, Surf Life Saving, Friends of Parks.		***Area of intersection…*** ***community recreation***	Good disability support services plan around people - with wellbeing and social connectedness often being primary goals. As above, properly supported leisure experiences can help people define themselves, and take control of their own lives.
Residential Communities			
Prisons, Retirement and Aged Care Environments, Hospitals and Student Residences are all engaged in the provision of recreation as a means of meeting important needs for social, physical and cultural engagement.			

Sport and active recreation	*Out of School Care*	*Community development*	*Events and event management*	*Community and political activism*	*Push Play Co-ordinators*
Sport in community environments and all kinds of active recreation can result from people's desire to be "part of" a community. Social reasons and a desire to be part of a local community are often primary reasons for going along.	Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) aims to provide children with a range of recreation opportunities. Children may learn new skills; connect with others, and develop some skills for lifelong participation in recreation.	Community recreation is partly about building opportunities and providing skills for quality leisure experiences – and should be a subset of good community work practice that focuses on whole life, e.g. including youth, older adults, refugee and migrant, employment, housing.	Community recreation might include an event as part of a process (e.g. a cultural festival might be included as part of a group's desire to celebrate their own culture) Events can create a sense of community but are not always longer-term community development interventions.	Community recreation may be the modality for informing political change eg. A hikoi or a social gathering which has a political agenda	Working with community organisations to organise recreation opportunities. We help schools, City Housing tenancy groups and churches to organise family Push Play events, Our role is to provide or help recreation opportunities for groups and individuals in the community who have limited access to present facilities and services.

A Wider View

Introduction

In this section, a 'desired future' for community recreation, both within and outside of NZRA, is explored.

This includes the need to recognise the centrality of community recreation within the whole recreation sector, and its key role in developing civil societies.

The desired future outlines the direction for NZRA in regard to 'growing' community recreation; through recognition, advocacy, capacity-building , career development, and enhancing strategic links with other government organisations and NGOs.

NZRA is an important springboard for developing Community Recreation, but recognises that it is only one of many players.

Desired future

The desired future for community recreation encompasses the need:

- to advocate its benefits at the highest levels;

- for a shared vision and agreed understanding between practitioners about what community recreation 'is'

- for commitment to professional development around community development within NZRA and other sectors.

Desired future		
Who	**NZRA**	**Recreation professionals**
Role	Articulate the values, processes and outcomes of community recreation Develop an over-arching philosophy for community recreation Advocate on the benefits for all sectors to 'buy in' to community recreation process	Take a lead within the recreation industry as: • facilitators of policy • providers of facilities and services • facilitators of community action • developers of professional skills Partner with stakeholders
Why	Current sectors focusing separately: need to recognise the areas of commonality that many groups identify from a wide range of sectors Lack of shared understanding of community recreation creating a gap Profile, capacity and capability currently low with little specific development focus on community recreation Poorly understood yet powerful process Not currently 'recognised' as being part of the recreation sector	People working in community recreation are invisible Community recreation is a multi-disciplinary process that can lead to "capture" by other sectors There is lack of widely recognised leadership and role models
What	Develop a shared vision and philosophy of community recreation Key stakeholders and other influencers champion community recreation at all levels Develop professional practice and career paths within the community recreation sector Monitor and evaluate	Strong advocacy internal, external, and interagency Identify key messages and channels Actively describe the outcomes of community recreation for the key decision makers Identify who should be involved locally as influencers, decision makers, providers Evaluate initiatives to justify development of community recreation sector Develop sector from a community-driven evidence base to a strengths base/needs base Celebrate leadership and showcase role models; share best practice Recognise innovation and collaboration
Short term outcomes	Community recreation is recognised by recreation people as the 'reason' why recreation settings exist A shared vision, shared language, terminology and agreed meanings Cross sector collaboration The purpose, processes and principles of community recreation widely understood Champions of community recreation clearly articulating output and outcome statements Image that 'says' community recreation	Valued profession, careers and qualifications Increased professional development in Community Recreation Community Recreation words would be commonplace with a recognised definition

Desired future			
Who	**Government**	**Communities**	**Individuals**
Role	Work across government including SPARC. Territorial Authorities, Conservation, Health, Transport, Social Development, Youth Development, Pacific Island Affairs, Te Puni Kokiri, Economic Development, Creative New Zealand, Culture and Heritage.	Provide input and guidance in ways that ensure the issues, barriers, needs and opportunities of different communities of interest are met Engage those communities less able to access existing recreation opportunities, for example: elderly, retirees, single parents, new migrants, Pacific Peoples, youth, women, parents, boys/men.	
Why	Local government is a channel for implementing central government policy (beyond SPARC)	Community ill health, social fragmentation, isolation, marginalisation	Understanding of the role of recreation in their lives
What	Identify central government priorities, funding and policies Plan for the confluence of central government priorities with community recreation and local delivery	Engage communities in community recreation Recognise support of communities in need Increase capacity and capability of communities Overtly use recreation as a tool to build and connect strong communities Add value to other recreation interventions through community recreation processes	Promote community recreation values and processes to volunteer community leaders Promote value of recreation participation as being part of civil society
Short term outcomes	Visible on Council and Central Government agendas and priorities Identification of models and structures (public/NGO/private)	Civil society through community recreation and through individual involvement Noticeably vibrant society Thriving culture Strong whanau, hapu, iwi	Recognition by individuals that even if walking or surfing, they are contributing to civil society