

Kia ora members of the Productivity Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

My submission to the content queries regarding a fair chance for all is quite specific to the Local Government sector, with which I am involved as the 5-year Mayor of the Central Otago District. This submission is made in my personal capacity, not on behalf of Council.

By way of background; I first came to Central Otago as a 29 year old solo-parent, on the DPB caring for a three year old and a one year old. I spent ten months on the benefit and eight further years as a sole parent on a single income.

I came into that situation as someone with a law degree and from a family that took, I would say, a higher than usual interest in politics.

I give you that background to emphasise the point of this submission. At no stage while I was struggling along in that part of my life did I cast my mind to local government and the effect the decisions made at the local government level had on my day-to-day life.

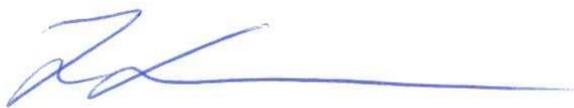
In other words, my voice was not heard because I did not use it.

Now I am inside local government, I see the same issue. I have any number of wealthy people knocking at my door, but I have to work really hard to get myself in the right places to hear the voices from the other end of the economic spectrum.

I campaigned to become Mayor seeking to have council engage more with the community. In some regards I can feel some success. The Long-Term Plan prior to my election had around 200 submissions, my first LTP around 450 and this years LTP around 850. That means around 1 in 26 people in the district submitted to the LTP which nationally is an outstanding result.

However, while I am really happy with that, and happy that we broke through a previously seen demographic barrier by having many more 30-40 age group represented, I still feel we are not hearing from lower socio-economic groups. And that is the group most vulnerable to our decisions in many ways.

So; please consider in getting a fairer deal for all how we empower those groups to be heard, because their silence is hurting them and from there hurting the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand.



Tim Cadogan

