Building social connectedness

**Summer of Fun**

The Summer of Fun began as a series of informal, free neighbourhood events to help communities “enjoy summer in the city, and to...take a break from the ongoing post-quake issues”.

It aimed to strengthen local connectedness during a period of uncertainty and stress in the suburbs worst affected by area-wide land damage as the aftershocks continued. Led by local churches and funded from philanthropic sources, Summer of Fun ran annually for five years, with up to 20,000 people attending as many as 70 events over each summer period.

Over time, the number and range of Summer of Fun activities expanded, as did the resources available to communities to run their own events. Summer of Fun gained an events trailer, complete with barbecue, tables and games that communities could hire for free for neighbourhood events. The Rotary Neighbourhood Project established a fund for neighbourhoods to buy food or other items to support resilience-building events such as Summer of Fun.

**Knowing Your Neighbour is a Piece of Cake**

Knowing Your Neighbour is a Piece of Cake was a social marketing campaign encouraging neighbours to get to know each other by sharing a piece of cake. Building social connectedness in this way supported psychosocial recovery, and built community resilience to deal with future disasters.

The campaign was led through a church network whose aim was to foster better-connected communities, particularly those that were affected by the earthquakes.

**Winter Chill**

In 2013 CERA’s Youth Wellbeing Survey found that the loss of recreational places and spaces through earthquake damage was having a negative effect on young people’s wellbeing. In response, government and business sponsors established a competitive fund to support Winter Chill, a series of affordable and accessible events developed by youth, for youth (aged 12 to 24 years). Nearly 6,000 young people attended more than 60 Winter Chill events in winter 2014.
CERA’s role
CERA’s direct contribution, which was also one reason for the success of these three events, was to provide ‘back office services’. These included administrative support, communications and marketing, branding and event management, project management expertise, link communities with philanthropic funders, and helping develop governance and operating structures.

What worked
• Remove the barriers to community-led recovery by providing back office supports.
• Employ staff with expertise in community development to build recovery-specific community networks, and to link the resources of the recovery agency with the needs of community groups.
• Mentor community leaders to deliver social recovery initiatives.
• Use evidence to identify needs and target efforts appropriately.
• Support communities to the point where they can once again lead themselves.

What we learnt
• Brand and market community activities as community-led and independent of government. Including central agency branding sometimes compromised community leaders, undermining their legitimacy within their own communities.

It was all about local connections. CERA helped with the communications. They did a good job on that. But the real problem was they took it over like they owned it... rather than something that was done by local communities for local communities.”

External participant