New Zealand communities’ response to COVID-19

Sho Isogai

Aotearoa New Zealand is at alert level 4/Eliminate and in lockdown. The Government declared a state of national emergency in late March 2020. Educational facilities and non-essential businesses are closed and people required to stay in their households.

Various community development approaches are being used to respond to COVID-19 in Aotearoa. Government organisations are applying a social planning model to create initiatives to support the public during the lockdown period. The Unite Against COVID-19 website\(^1\), welfare information\(^2\), social services guidance\(^3\), employer wage-subsidies\(^4\), and grant funds\(^5\) support businesses, startups/social enterprises, social services and the public. Government ministries provide regular updates and professional/expert advice on COVID-19 to the public via social media\(^6\). Local governments are focused on providing essential/lifeline services to the public, such as drinking water and other public amenities.\(^7\)

Many charities/NGOs are using a community-led development approach. Seeds Podcast produces YouTube videos on the collective charity/NGO sector response to COVID-19\(^8\). Philanthropy New Zealand has published an open letter\(^9\) on the current situation outlining principles for philanthropists/grant-makers. Community housing organisations such as Community Housing Aotearoa\(^10\) and Te Matapihi\(^11\) are working closely with government organisations and actively supporting their members through the lockdown period. The Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ) has produced online assistance and advocacy to support members’ businesses and property management\(^12\).

The mental health and addiction body (Platform Trust\(^13\)) and workforce centre (Te Pou) have been re-developing training and guidance\(^14\) into online formats to meet emerging workforce needs among community providers. Mental health organisations such as Changing Minds\(^15\) are using social media

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\(^1\) [https://covid19.govt.nz/](https://covid19.govt.nz/)
\(^8\) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nz2RkDp4ZRU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nz2RkDp4ZRU) and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HYr_YLbDgM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HYr_YLbDgM)
\(^9\) [https://philanthropy.org.nz/covid-19-and-philanthropy-open-letter/?fbclid=IwAR1oytv0SNK42HG6RM22IyK3HongOV1-naqbtQ5PWWEIWrzC3xdWelQdweF](https://philanthropy.org.nz/covid-19-and-philanthropy-open-letter/?fbclid=IwAR1oytv0SNK42HG6RM22IyK3HongOV1-naqbtQ5PWWEIWrzC3xdWelQdweF)
\(^10\) [https://my.send.net.nz/#/ViewEmail/r/EA9AA1A01D7F8C2540EF23F30FEDEDFBF06D6E8ID5981ACAF060D6555554232](https://my.send.net.nz/#/ViewEmail/r/EA9AA1A01D7F8C2540EF23F30FEDEDFBF06D6E8ID5981ACAF060D6555554232) and [https://my.send.net.nz/#/ViewEmail/r/D1C2A0627F643D12540EF23F30FEDEDFBF06D6E8ID5981ACAF060D6555554232](https://my.send.net.nz/#/ViewEmail/r/D1C2A0627F643D12540EF23F30FEDEDFBF06D6E8ID5981ACAF060D6555554232)
\(^12\) [https://www.blog.reinz.co.nz/blog/reinz-issues-further-update-covid-19/?blcid=IwAR1yqWwH0c0XnNV0RAcMWX8oz7f XMHd1Y_O44UkYnyv6U7bSrRl6U](https://www.blog.reinz.co.nz/blog/reinz-issues-further-update-covid-19/?blcid=IwAR1yqWwH0c0XnNV0RAcMWX8oz7f XMHd1Y_O44UkYnyv6U7bSrRl6U)
and [http://www.flexisign.co.nz/?fbclid=IwAR2txQ_wN3kJT7paw1iRFx570sefYUli_Reyzk8qTPFmJlfis-lx8nlo](http://www.flexisign.co.nz/?fbclid=IwAR2txQ_wN3kJT7paw1iRFx570sefYUli_Reyzk8qTPFmJlfis-lx8nlo)
\(^13\) [https://www.platform.org.nz/covid-19](https://www.platform.org.nz/covid-19)
\(^15\) [https://changingminds.org.nz/](https://changingminds.org.nz/)
to actively inform their communities on their services, campaigns (i.e., Getting through together\(^16\)) and/or support\(^7\) regarding COVID-19.\(^{18}\) Kaupapa Māori\(^9\) and Pacific people’s\(^{20}\) community organisations are taking proactive cultural leadership in their communities, while Rainbow YOUTH is continuing its support services for queer, gender diverse and intersex youth\(^{21}\) - with well-practiced in peer support throughout this period.

Community-based organisations and business networks are taking a sustainable community development approach. The Ākina Foundation has published a COVID-19 recovery article\(^{22}\) to support social/impact enterprises across the country. Sustainability and waste-management organisations such as Sustainability Business Network (SBN)\(^{23}\) and Zero Waste Network (ZWN)\(^{24}\) offer support to local businesses and/or enterprises.

A centralised government and NGO working-group in response to the COVID-19 is working in the domestic family and sexual violence sector. The Family Violence Clearinghouse\(^25\) and the COVID-19 website\(^26\) have created a central platform for all COVID-19 resource page. A social media campaign, called Catch yourself was created by Le Va\(^27\). In the disability sector, organisations such as Disability Connect have undertaken initiatives to co-ordinate the delivery of donated groceries and care-packages for people with disabilities and their families via disability NGO’s collectives and volunteers.\(^{28}\)

Migrants\(^{29},\) refugees\(^{31}\), deaf\(^{32}\), blind/low-vision\(^{33}\), aged-care\(^{34}\), international development\(^{35}\), volunteering\(^{36}\), and business/investment\(^{37}\) sectors and communities are also actively tackling COVID-19.


\(^{17}\) [https://www.jazzthornton.com/post/fighting-mental-illness-during-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR0VeelvLY4f7IjHe13UrKv6zX2jiGRTtpTB-hNrwGvFQesFTp5Tio4c](https://www.jazzthornton.com/post/fighting-mental-illness-during-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR0VeelvLY4f7IjHe13UrKv6zX2jiGRTtpTB-hNrwGvFQesFTp5Tio4c)


\(^{20}\) [https://pasiifikafutures.co.nz/covid-19-support/](https://pasiifikafutures.co.nz/covid-19-support/)


\(^{22}\) [https://www.akina.org.nz/covid19](https://www.akina.org.nz/covid19)

\(^{23}\) [https://sustainable.org.nz/covid19](https://sustainable.org.nz/covid19)


\(^{26}\) [https://www.nzaca.org.nz/covid-19](https://www.nzaca.org.nz/covid-19)


\(^{29}\) [https://www.leva.co.nz/our-investment/recent-initiatives-to-support-new-zealand-businesses](https://www.leva.co.nz/our-investment/recent-initiatives-to-support-new-zealand-businesses)

\(^{30}\) [https://www.leva.co.nz/our-investment/recent-initiatives-to-support-new-zealand-businesses](https://www.leva.co.nz/our-investment/recent-initiatives-to-support-new-zealand-businesses)

\(^{31}\) [https://rasnz.co.nz/covid-19-resources/](https://rasnz.co.nz/covid-19-resources/)


\(^{34}\) [https://www.nzaca.org.nz/covid-19](https://www.nzaca.org.nz/covid-19)


Powerful local/national responses to global challenge are exemplified in various sectors and communities at all levels in Aotearoa.

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