

What is Government Doing?

Government responsibilities for the promotion of environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being are split between central and regional government, with the latter often taking a monitoring and advocacy rather than delivery role.

National Policy

Policy direction at the national level has direct impacts on households and communities in the Auckland region. Central government has a strong policy focus on lifting New Zealand's economy and increasing employment rates (Prime Minister, 2011). Initiatives such as the '2025 Taskforce' aim to close the income gap between New Zealand and Australia by 2025. The close relationship between economic and social well-being means that this focus will have flow-on effects to social outcomes and well-being of individuals, families and communities throughout New Zealand and may also affect the environment.

At the national level, the development of social policy is led primarily by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). In addition, other central government agencies play an important role in delivering on social well-being, including the Ministries of Health and of Education and the Department of Labour. The range of involvements is enormous and this report focuses on a few key areas only.

One area with far-reaching social consequences and implications for social well-being in Auckland is housing, particularly residents' access to affordable housing. The combined roles of Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), the Department of Building and Housing and MSD set building codes and regulations, and help meet the accommodation needs of those unable to do so through the private sector market.

An Auckland Policy Office has been established to assist in developing and implementing government policy in Auckland. It includes representation from a wide range of Ministries and Departments. It aims to provide an informed Auckland perspective on the development of central government policy and coordinate a collaborative approach for central government engagement in key regional forms and projects.

For Maori, the Whanau Ora initiative marks a shift away from present mechanisms for delivering social support towards providing practical, community-based support to whanau, so that they can be self-managing and determine their own cultural, economic, and social development.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) has developed an Auckland Pacific Strategic Plan with five priority areas (improved coordination, celebrating diversity, leadership, economic development and youth employment) to enable agencies and organisations in the region to work together to improve outcomes for Pacific peoples.

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Other important Ministries and Departments operate in the social policy domain. In the economic and environmental areas the lead departments are the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry for the Environment.

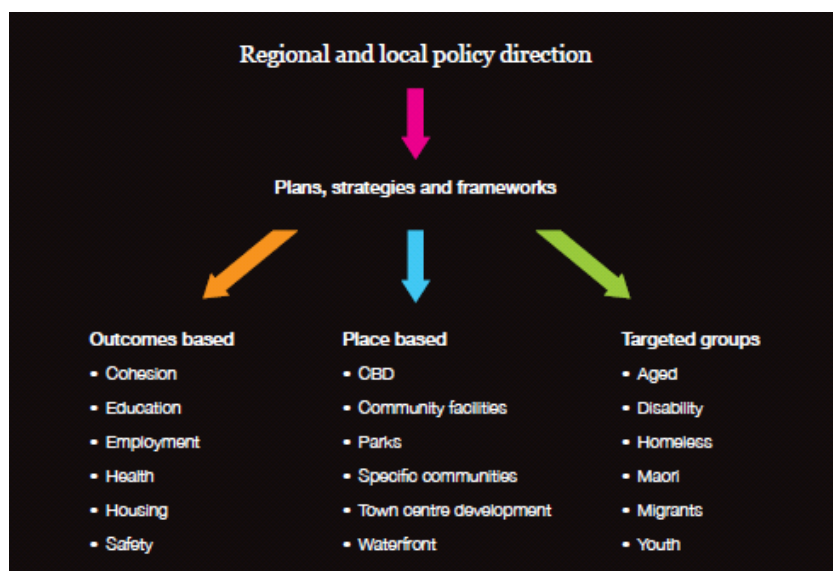
While central government is largely responsible for broad policy-setting and organising delivery of services and for regulatory monitoring and oversight, actual services are often delivered through a range of agencies (e.g. schools, District Health Boards, contracted service agencies etc.).

In addition, many matters such as the transfer of incomes amongst households (e.g. support for beneficiaries) are conducted through a direct relationship between central government and Auckland residents.

Regional and Local Policy

The Auckland Council has a responsibility through the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 2002) to promote social well-being and to incorporate social aspects of well-being into its planning processes, and through other strategies and frameworks.

The importance of social well-being for Auckland's residents has been identified through a number of key strategic documents including the Auckland Regional Long-Term Council Community Plan, the Auckland Sustainability Framework and the Auckland Regional Economic Development Strategy. Themes such as social cohesion, social equity, social connectedness and access run through each of these documents. Currently, each of these strategies, plans or frameworks address social well-being through a particular lens and set of priorities; for example, land-use and transport planning, economic development, and sustainability principles. Implementation involves a range of activities such as policy setting, advocacy, funding, facilitation, monitoring and partnering.





As the diagram shows, plans and strategies can be targeted to specific outcomes, be place-based or address a particular issue for a specific group.

With the establishment of the single unified Auckland Council, policy (and services) will be delivered by one council, rather than eight, as well as through the 21 local boards and to an extent the seven Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs). Two key initiatives accompanying these will be the establishment of the Auckland Social Policy Forum and the development of a Spatial Plan for Auckland. The Auckland Social Policy Forum to be led by MSD (2010), will focus on “concrete action” by bringing the Auckland Council and central government together to agree on shared approaches to improve social well-being and underlining plans of action. It will comprise of the Minister for Social Development as Chair, the Mayor of Auckland Council, and chairs of relevant Auckland Council committees, together with some representation from local boards and communities.

Auckland Council is also preparing a Spatial Plan for Auckland which will provide broad strategic direction for the region and will act as an integrating mechanism. It will be underpinned by a connected planning framework, including a regional social strategy. This will provide opportunities to better coordinate decisions, programmes and projects that will impact on all areas of environmental, economic and social well-being in the whole region, and in particular geographic sub-areas. The Spatial Plan will be prepared through wider ranging engagement with key stakeholders. Both the Spatial Plan and the Social Policy Forum are expected to have strong connections with Maori, Pacific, Auckland’s communities, interest groups and the voluntary sector.

New Channels for Communities

Changes in Auckland’s governance structure include the establishment of 21 local boards, as well as a Maori Statutory Board and Pacific and Ethnic advisory panels. Local boards will have a significant and wide-ranging role in local place-shaping. They will make decisions on local matters, provide leadership to the community, and provide input into region-wide strategies and plans, including those of the council-controlled organizations (CCOs). Boards will have oversight of community facilities; represent the social issues in their communities to other decision makers, develop and maintain local social infrastructure; endeavour to capture the benefits of diversity in their communities and address issues of social concern to the communities to whom they are democratically accountable.

To maintain effective engagement with all communities in Auckland, several advisory groups are being or have been established, including a Maori statutory board representing mana whenua and mataaawaka of Tamaki Makaurau. This board has responsibilities ranging across social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

Auckland Council will also be guided by a Pacific People’s Advisory Panel and Ethnic People’s Advisory Panel. The role of the panels is to identify and communicate to the council the interests and preferences of their respective people regarding the council’s strategies, policies, plans and bylaws, and on any other matters of interest to their respective people, and on the most appropriate ways to engage with Pacific and ethnic people.

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