

COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUPS

Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs INTERNAL REVIEW

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Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

- This report has been compiled in response to a need identified at the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) staff planning workshop held on 22nd May 2008 for an internal evaluation of CRGs. One overall objective was specified: *To explore the extent to which CRGs meet the current needs of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs.*
- Lana Perese (Senior Research Analyst) conducted the review. Peer critique was provided by Debbie McLeod (Director of Policy and Monitoring).
- The CRG review report brings together the findings from the current internal evaluation, preceding external evaluations and literature searches. This information will be used by MPIA to review their role in community consultation and to consider the models of consultation with the Pacific community that will meet the Ministry's needs going forward.

Method

- New information for the review was gathered through in-depth qualitative interviews. The interviews were conducted with purposively selected MPIA staff and CRG members in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. A questionnaire schedule was developed to explore five inter-related questions zones: the history of CRGs, the process, positives and negatives, an assessment of needs and a review of opportunities.

Findings and Analyses

1. History: CRGs were established in 2001 as part of the Pacific Capacity Building strategy to meet a variety of communication and consultation needs between Government and Pacific communities. Overall participants provided an accurate historical overview on the establishment of CRGs during the *PCB* as well as MPIAs expectations of these groups.
2. CRG Processes: Selection of participants, the cost of CRGs (both to members and agencies) and the management of the CRG process emerged as the key themes relating to the CRG process.
 - Selection: Selection of CRG members was via a nominations and election process with the aim being for varied ethnic representation on the groups. Participants in the review felt that the selection process resulted in CRG members who were 'emotional choices of traditional leaders'. Although responses varied, participants generally expressed dissatisfaction with the CRG selection process.

- Participants reported that the people selected were not necessarily the people Government Agency's would have identified as having the skills required for the role. They were also often people with many other commitments to community events and Boards resulting in challenges in finding sufficient time for CRG participation.
 - Cost: Respondents' perceptions of the appropriateness of the fees paid varied. The lack of adjustment of the fees over time may have resulted in a perceived mismatch between the expectations placed on CRG members and the fees paid to them. It was commonly noted that the management of CRGs was an additional expense for MPIA. CRGs functioned most effectively when they were well managed. The time required from members must be acknowledged with appropriate payment.
 - Management: The review of CRG processes highlighted conditions which must be met for CRGs or an alternative group to be effective. That is:
 - The purpose of the group needs to be clear;
 - Group members must be provided with clarity about what their role is and what is required from them on each occasion the group meets;
 - Meetings must be well managed, material must be provided to participants in advance so they have time to study it or talk more widely to community members if required to do so; and
 - There must be a feedback process in place so group members are able to see how the information they have provided has been used and to report this back to their communities
3. Positives and Negatives: Two dominant themes emerged within this section: perceptions of effectiveness and perceived areas for improvement.
- Perceptions of effectiveness: Several themes emerged which included: examples of when groups had been effective and of outputs, provision of 'grass-roots understandings', relationships and links with the community, an accessible resource and, the need for effective management (a theme specific to Christchurch)
 - Perceived areas for improvement: Several themes emerged within this section which included: management, feedback to groups, dissemination of information, youth and Pan-Pacific perspectives.
4. Needs Assessment: Ambivalent and varied perspectives emerged within this section on MPIAs current needs. One consistent theme was the ongoing need for appropriate communication with Pacific communities.

Expert advisors within specific sectors were generally considered most appropriate to provide evidence based advice and knowledge to MPIA and other government agencies. However, being well informed of community realities was also considered necessary to the work undertaken within MPIA. Further analysis indicated that there

is uncertainty about who the ‘right’ people are, what their purpose may be and whether they are being selected for CRGs. Thus, in some cases where there is doubt, expert advisory groups were considered appropriate.

5. Opportunities: Participants in the review identified three options: keeping the CRGs, establishing CRG and Expert Advisory Groups and disestablishing CRGs in favour of Expert Advisory Groups. Other themes relevant to an ideal process included: improving links with other advisory boards/committees, the role of the MPIA Communications Directorate, appropriate selection processes and the value and need for youth representation.

Conclusions and Implications

- Generally participants considered that CRGs had been effective in meeting the initial needs that lead to their establishment but considered that as time had passed and the role of the CRGs had become less clear they had become less effective. In addition the existence of other consultation processes (Leader’s Councils, Agency and project Pacific Advisory Groups) had changed the need for separate CRGs.
- All participants in the review were clear that a process to consult with and obtain feedback from Pacific communities was essential to meet MPIAs current need for two-way communication with Pacific communities, provision of specialist knowledge and intelligence on emerging issues.
- The review highlighted what is necessary for establishing and maintaining successful consultation including clarity about roles and purpose, selection of appropriate group members, support needs and effective management of groups.
- The Ministry’s consultation needs vary and participants in the review discussed a range of different options about how the Ministry’s needs could be met, including retaining CRGs and/or setting up advisory groups.
- Further work is required to be clear about the consultation needs for both MPIA and MPIA’s ongoing role in working with other agencies to consult with Pacific communities. Once this is clear the extent to which the Ministry’s needs are met by CRGs or by expert advisory groups or by some other processes will be able to be defined.

1. Introduction

In 2001, Community Reference Groups (CRGs) were established as a key milestone under the *Pacific Capacity Building (PCB)* strategy. These groups were largely purposed to improve collaboration between Pacific communities and Government and were primarily utilised as a mechanism of consultation over the three year lifespan of the *PCB*.

CRGs played an important monitoring role and provided valuable input into an extensive nationwide consultation process (including more than 5,000 Pacific peoples and 30 Government agencies) that informed the development of eight regional Programmes of Action under the *PCB*. By 2003, many of the milestones identified under these Programmes of Action were achieved and the role of CRGs as a consultation infrastructure within *PCB* was acknowledged. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) also supported continued engagement with these groups at this time as stated in the 2003 Annual Report¹:

“While PCB itself is almost completed...policy and service responsiveness by agencies towards Pacific communities remains an ongoing priority. To that end the CRGs and officials continue to take advantage of the PCB consultation infrastructure. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs is very happy to support these continuing engagements which we hope will remain a permanent fixture in the social policy development environment.”

This review has been conducted in response to internal discussions from the CRG workshop held at the MPIA staff planning session on 22nd May 2008. The staff planning workshop was intended to gauge staff perspectives on the continued need for and role of CRGs. Key themes posed for discussion were:

- Disestablish CRG – yes or no (provide reasons for both);
- Focus group/specialists/expert scenario – how might this work out? Possible name for the group?
- MPIAs role(s) – agencies, communities, specialists etc.

Overall, current MPIA staff noted that since no internal evaluation specific to the role and effectiveness of CRGs has been conducted, any decision made within the workshop would be ill-informed and the need for an internal review of CRGs was highlighted. This internal MPIA review follows on from an evaluation of the *PCB* in 2005 by Paulin, Tanielu and Kingi² and a 2007 review by Karlo Mila-Schaaf³.

The CRG review report brings together the findings from the current internal evaluation and preceding external evaluations and will be used by MPIA to review their role in

¹ MPIA Annual Report, 2003.

² J. Paulin, L. Tanielu and V. Kingi. (2005). *An Evaluation of the Pacific Building Strategy*. Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Wellington.

³ K. Mila-Schaaf. (2007) Stakeholder Interviews Report Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Wellington.

community consultation and to consider the models of consultation with the Pacific community that will meet the Ministry's needs going forward.

2. Background

Since 1999, MPIA reports and documents have consistently identified the need for improved collaboration and partnerships between Pacific communities and Government to address problems facing Pacific peoples⁴.

In 2001, Cabinet recognised CRGs as an important component of the implementation and monitoring phase of the *Pacific Capacity Building (PCB)* strategy. Within this three year pilot strategy, six CRGs were established across New Zealand (Auckland, Northshore, Hamilton, Hawkes Bay, Wellington and Christchurch) purposed to:

- Provide community advice to Government agencies on the implementation of Pacific strategies and/or initiatives that effect Pacific peoples in New Zealand;
- Communicate to their respective Pacific communities the work of Government agencies and to provide feedback to Government agencies on the effectiveness of the implementation process; and
- Provide community advice to the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs on the effectiveness of Government agencies implementation process.

Specifically within the Terms of Reference, CRGs were expected to:

- Advise Government agencies on Pacific strategies and/or initiatives that effect Pacific peoples in New Zealand;
- Advise Government agencies in the development of work programmes in their respective areas based around Pacific strategies and/or initiatives;
- Advise the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs in providing community feedback on the progress of agencies in the implementation of Pacific strategies and/or initiatives;
- Provide feedback to their respective communities where appropriate through community meetings, fono, seminars etc;
- Advise the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs of the need to co-opt the assistance of people with the knowledge, skills and technical expertise in the sectors relevant to the Government Agency they are meeting; and
- Familiarise itself with Pacific strategies and/or initiatives that effect Pacific peoples in New Zealand as provided by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs.

CRG members were expected to have some, but not complete knowledge of the social, cultural, economic, health, education and employment environment in New Zealand as it affects Pacific peoples, and some understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local

⁴ Pacific Directions Report (1999), Pacific Analysis Framework (with Consultation Guidelines) (1999), Pacific Vision Report Series (1999), MPIA Annual Reports (1999, 2000, 2003), Pacific Economic Action Plan and Pacific Women's Economic Development Plan (2007)

and central government departments. MPIA worked with the CRGs to identify any knowledge gaps and other capacity building needs, and set out to further equip members through training, planning sessions and the provision of some administrative support. For example, MPIA helped with setting up terms of reference to guide CRGs in the provision of advice to government agencies. MPIA also assisted in the establishment of some memorandums of understanding between CRGs and specific government agencies (for example, with the Ministry of Education).

In February 2001, Cabinet approved changes to MPIA appropriations to allow for an internal transfer of \$0.5 million to help build the capacity of Pacific CRGs. CRG members were remunerated for consultative meetings convened by government agencies according to guidelines set by the State Services Commission for the payment of advisory and reference groups. (Meeting fees were set at \$105.00 gross for up to 3 hours and \$210 gross for over 3 hours. There was also provision for an additional fee for CRG chairs as appropriate). Payment was the responsibility of the government agency that convened the meeting.

2.1. PCB Evaluation⁵

In 2005, an evaluation of the *PCB* was conducted which provided insights into the constructs, characteristics and perceived effectiveness of CRGs. This evaluation included 28 government officials involved with the *PCB* strategy, CRG members in eight regions (North Shore, Waitakere, Auckland, Manukau, Hamilton, Porirua, and Christchurch and Lower Hutt CRG) and 33 Pacific people living in Auckland.

Data for this review was collected through focus group discussions on CRG operations, relationships with government agencies, level of input into government initiatives, as well as contributions that the *PCB* has made to their understanding of government processes, what hinders/help them in their roles and the contribution *PCB* has made.

2.1.1. Operations

Paulin, Tanielu and Kingi (2005) explored CRG perspectives on operational features such as: systems and structures, meetings, understanding & community feedback, internal relationships and financial compensation. For the purpose of this review, it is important to note that:

Systems and Structures: The evaluation identified that different internal processes existed within the CRGs throughout New Zealand. Some groups adopted a collective approach (e.g. Christchurch) whilst others (e.g. Auckland, North Shore, Hamilton, Lower Hutt) were organised into subcommittees by sector and interest/expertise. As is to be expected, CRGs met frequently throughout the *PCB*. In 2001, there were 87 meetings with various government agencies to discuss progress on a *PCB*-related milestone or new initiative for Pacific peoples. In 2002, they met 137 times. In 2003, the last year of the

⁵ J. Paulin, L. Tanielu and V. Kingi. (2005). *An Evaluation of the Pacific Building Strategy*. Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Wellington.

PCB implementation phase, 125 PCB-related meetings were held. It is noted that lower levels of activity were reported for North Shore and Hamilton.

Meetings: The evaluation highlighted the need for a more co-ordinated approach across government agencies. CRG members sought more co-ordinated efforts on the scheduling of engagement meetings and preferred to have them outside of normal business hours. A commitment to advance notice was required to allow appropriate time for preparation.

Monitoring: A need for appropriate monitoring was identified as was the need to clarify whose role it was to keep records and minutes of meetings.

Understanding – Community Engagement: The evaluation identified a need for government agencies to utilise clearer messages and language when consulting with CRGs. Consistent updates on *PCB* progress were also required in a format easily understood by wider Pacific communities. CRG members felt pressured by the high expectations of their respective communities, some struggled with disseminating high level information and others felt isolated in representing the views of their entire ethnic community.

Internal Relationships: CRG membership was noted to empower some members and some claimed a reasonable level of clarity around the purpose of their role. These roles required flexibility and adaptability to meet the needs of government agencies and most importantly it was noted that the quality of input had improved over time.

Financial compensation: CRG members were generally pleased to be receiving some financial recognition for their participation in engagement meetings with agencies. In addition, members would have liked to have been remunerated for meetings of their own, and for their communications about the *PCB* strategy to their communities.

Overall most comments from CRG members suggested a generally positive and effective working relationship with MPIA officials at both national and regional levels throughout the duration of the *PCB*.

2.1.2. Relationships with Government Agencies

The evaluation also identified that CRG members felt more able to assist officials with the implementation of milestones where they perceived officials to have a genuine desire to engage with them. They enjoyed being able to engage with more senior officials, and with officials who could see issues in the broader context. More typically, though, CRG members expressed concerns about the meaningfulness and openness of their engagements with agencies and as a result CRG members had higher levels of engagement with some departments than with others.

Agency Perspectives: It was noted that the national and regional offices interviewed within the 2005 *PCB* evaluation perceived that their agency's generally limited the use of CRGs to obtaining Pacific advice. Also, some officials could not recall receiving any

particular guidance on when to consult with CRGs. Of those that did utilise these groups for consultation it was noted that:

- Frequency of use of CRGs was largely unchanged over 3 years;
- Relationships strengthened over this time; and
- Some agencies used CRGs (Auckland) more broadly than for *PCB* related matters.

Paulin, Tanielu and Kingi (2005) identified some of the perceived barriers to effective engagement which included:

- Access to other Pacific advice streams;
- Selection processes and capability issues among some CRG members;
- Issues to do with information sharing (privacy concerns);
- Remuneration issues, with some agencies (such as MoE) having no wish or history of payment for their consultations with Pacific communities;
- A lack of research data to keep members informed about issues;
- High turnover of CRG members;
- Some CRG members appeared to experience some difficulties understanding their roles and responsibilities;
- Some had difficulty taking a step back and seeing the bigger picture; and
- Some appeared not to impartially represent the views of their ethnic community.

The evaluation also noted several strengths with the CRG model which:

- Provided a ready-made opportunity to consult with and talk with a group from a variety of cultural backgrounds in the one place;
- Was a good source of free and frank feedback about a government agency's performance in terms of its service delivery at a regional level;
- Provided opportunity for agencies to use CRGs as a sounding board and to explore new ways of working; and
- Drew strength from their numbers and were most effective where they had been provided with preparatory material in advance of meetings.

Several factors constituted the perceived ideal process from an agency's perspective. These included, coordinated cross agency engagements with CRGs (rather than multiple one off 'silo' engagements between one agency and one CRG), addressing capability issues of some CRG members, relationship management issues, and resourcing and payment issues.

CRG perspectives: CRG members favoured engaging with senior officials over lower level or inexperienced staff. They considered their engagement open and honest and were more inclined to assist government agencies that appeared genuinely interested in engaging. CRGs also noted that their relationships with agencies improved over time. It is important to note that CRG members became increasingly concerned about the advice provided to agencies given that other Pacific advisory groups may have also commented on particular issues. They also noted an inconsistency between what was included in the participating agencies six monthly reports and what was actually happening. CRG

members advocated the need for greater recognition by government agencies and appropriate feedback on their performance.

2.1.3. Input into Government Initiatives

The evaluation identified that some members expressed a need for further understanding of government processes. It was also noted that the extent of engagement varied between regional reference groups and government agencies.

2.1.4. Effectiveness

Overall, CRG members generally agreed that the *PCB* strategy made a difference for Pacific peoples and communities, however it is important to note that despite progress some indicated that there was no tangible evidence of this. Regardless, the majority stated that the *PCB* integrated Pacific components into agency strategies and developed current Pacific specific strategies. It also increased the capacity of Pacific peoples within government agencies, expanded MPIAs capacity and increased Pacific awareness amongst public servants. CRG members also identified personal development and up-skilling in terms of government processes and policies.

In summary this evaluation provides a detailed perspective on CRGs and identifies several ambiguities relating to their effectiveness, use, role, structure and management.

2.2. MPIA Review (2007)

As a component of the MPIA review undertaken in 2007, a report by Karlo Mila-Schaaf although not focused on CRGs or the *PCB* identified further ambiguities associated with the role of CRGs (**Stakeholder Interviews Report submitted Oct 2007**)

Specifically the review centred on:

- Collection of views from key stakeholders from the Pacific community about the Ministry exploring perceptions that these stakeholders have about the Ministry's role, its effectiveness, its strengths and weakness and importantly where they envisage the Ministry's role in the future; and
- Drafting a report of findings from a survey and interviews that will inform the review and assist the Chief Executive in organising possible ways of repositioning the Ministry in order to deliver agreed outcomes.

The review concluded that the CRG programme was one of the major Ministry programmes many participants knew about. There was a high awareness of CRGs, but also mixed responses on their effectiveness. Some of the concerns noted in the review include:

- Over-consultation, under-delivery;

- One-way traffic (i.e. MPIA disseminates information via CRGs, but it was not clear how CRG ideas and feedback translate into policy outcomes);
- Perception that people on CRGs were essentially consulted ‘after the fact’;
- Query the effectiveness of consulting the same people all the time, i.e. ‘overload’ (i.e. burden) and un-representative;
- A query about why other groups already in existence were not used (e.g. North Shore Pacific Forum, city council advisory groups, Samoan advisory groups etc);
- A style of presentation that was not responsive to the audience’s level of understanding or language skills (i.e. too much jargon and policy-speak); and
- The ‘same’ sorts of people tending to be on groups and a danger that CRG consultation does not capture the ‘right’ problems via these people.

The review also noted that there was a need for CRGs in Napier, Hastings, Nelson (places where fewer Pacific peoples reside) to address regional and rural issues. Some participants considered them a “*waste of time*” and others expressed that consultation with ‘experts’ would be more time/cost effective. There was still a strong expectation that MPIA have good links to the community and a liaison role, however it was suggested that imaginative and creative ways of communicating/engaging with Pacific communities are required (e.g. Bebo, E-mail, postal newsletters).

Another important point within the Stakeholder Interviews Report (2007) which is of relevance later in this internal review on CRGs is the perceived value of MPIA co-ordinating a leadership programme for emerging Pacific leaders or for young Pacific people in the public service. Developing a network and providing support for young people was seen to be a tangible thing for MPIA to do. Ideas included providing media training, governance training etc.

Overall, neither Paulin, Tanielu and Kingi (2005) nor the Stakeholder Interviews Report (2007) focused specifically on CRGs, however both implicitly rather than explicitly provided ambiguous insights on these groups. Consistent with these reports, ambivalent perspectives on CRGs emerged within the MPIA staff planning workshop held on 22nd May 2008.

3. Review Objective

The overall objective of this review is to explore the extent to which CRGs meet the *current* needs (i.e. two-way communication with Pacific communities, provision of specialist knowledge and intelligence on emerging issues) of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. This information will inform recommendations as to the future relevance of CRGs to the Ministry.

The focus of this review is the CRGs established for the *PCB* in 2001. The purpose, role, effectiveness and future possibilities will be analysed. This study will concentrate on the previous and potential role of CRGs in community consultation, and what is required to ensure appropriate and high quality services from community consultation groups in the future.

4. Method

This internal review was undertaken by the Senior Research Analyst. It required that all staff and CRG members selected as key informants provide at least 1 to 1 ½ hours of their time. Information gathered from interviews was through the perceptions of ten staff members and seven CRG members.

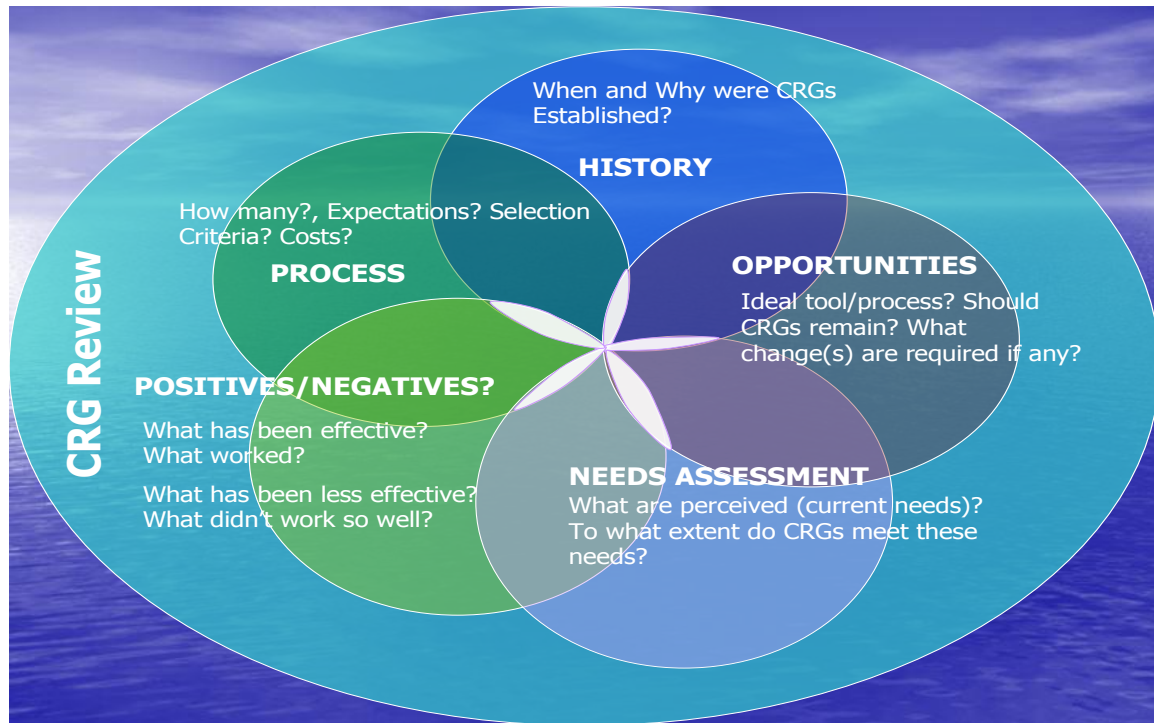
Participants were purposively selected within each MPIA region. Factors taken into consideration in the selection process of staff members (Auckland (3), Wellington (3) and Christchurch (3)) were knowledge of and experience with, CRG establishment, purpose and background. CRG members were purposively selected from the current list of members within the MPIA database to provide a range of experiences and localities.

4.1. Interview Schedule

This review qualitatively investigates five inter-related sections and question zones purposed to address key questions (see Figure 1). A semi-structured interview schedule was developed (see Appendix 1) as it allowed the use of open-ended questions to explore question zones of interest. The semi-structured interview schedule also enabled the researcher to probe for as much detail as possible within the question zones and to take discussions beyond surface level explorations. In this process participants' subjective experiences were maximised and they were enabled to freely discuss their realities and thoughts on CRGs.

The semi-structured nature of the questionnaire also provided participants and the researcher flexibility to move within and between the question zones in no particular order throughout the duration of the interview. The question zones were kept in mind throughout the interview and these highlighted areas of interest for probe and more in-depth information.

Figure 1: Five Inter-related Questions Zones for Interview Schedule



5. Findings & Discussion

5.1. Zone One: History

The majority of participants correctly recalled that CRGs were established in 2001 as part of the PCB process. One staff member elaborated on this and implied that the 1999 Pacific Vision Conference which identified community's concerns of having no Pacific voice within government agencies led to the development of the *PCB* and the subsequent formation of CRGs.

It was generally perceived by interview participants that CRGs were primarily established for several reasons which included to:

- Provide a community perspective to different government agencies;
- Provide a link/bridge between MPIA, communities and government;
- Inform MPIAs policy advice;
- Bring grass roots understandings to Government and to the work undertaken within MPIA;
- Provide input into other agencies policy development;
- Provide advice to government agencies on the implementation on the Programmes of Action within the *PCB*; and

- Help with the *PCB* – A vehicle to disseminate to the community and also gather views from the community as to whether *PCB* was working well or meeting needs.

Participants also illustrated various expectations of those on the groups which included:

- A mandate to be a representative of an ethnic community;
- An expectation that members were leaders within their community thereby providing MPIA with the confidence that the wider dissemination of information would occur;
- Having good community networks;
- Understanding government sectors;
- Ability to feed information to the Ministry and other government departments; and
- Ability to take information back to their communities.

5.2. Zone Two: CRG Processes

Three dominant themes emerged within this section on CRG processes (selection, cost and management). Each is discussed below and relevant sub-themes are noted.

Selection: “Emotional Choices of Traditional Leaders”

The selection of CRG members was through a community nomination and election process. Each region aimed for varied ethnic representation on the groups. The nomination process provided transparency in the initial formation of the CRGs, however many participants noted that, at times, despite efforts to encourage the selection of appropriate members, some key people had little chance of being selected. The following excerpt exemplifies the reality of a transparent nomination process and how this initially inhibited the selection of members.

“Our Pacific community are really good at this, they all drag a hundred people along to get them in but they may not be the appropriate person. Yes in the early days that’s what happened but our intention was to make sure this is the voice of the community. We as an agency knew roughly who would be the best people on the CRGs, we didn’t get them, but we knew who they were...”

Participants also noted that people selected in the nomination process were often those involved in various other committees and boards. This was considered to impact on commitment to the CRG.

“The commitment by some of these people, some of them are leaders so you can imagine this is just one thing on top of everything else they do and so the commitment has been poor. Especially in strategic policy decisions, strategic strategies you know huge things that we know are important for our people but they don’t come up and that’s been frustrating for us particularly in the education sector.”

Alternatively, participants noted that over time as the CRGs developed across all regions there was a broader representation of various sector experts and a higher calibre of

membership within some groups. The following excerpts from Auckland and Christchurch exemplify this.

“So that was a bit of trial and error. The neat thing about this though is that as the process went on the community got wise...they realised they needed to be smarter, they needed to listen to the criteria.” (Auckland)

“...and as they grew they nominated really key people...Now with the [ethnic group deleted], as of late we have really high calibre people but there were times where some people were nominated because they are respected but perhaps lack knowledge on government you know when it comes to engagement with government agencies.” (Christchurch)

It is also important to note that the short-comings in the nomination process noted earlier acted to influence the involvement of some current CRG members.

“I didn’t like that cause I didn’t think that they were getting the community voice, like all the faifeaus...so I attended a meeting and stood for election.”

Cost: “...In the past couple of years it was a bit of a joke...”

Participants noted that the sitting fee for CRG members which had been stipulated by the SSC funding guide was \$105.00 gross for up to 2 hours and anything beyond this timeframe was \$210.00 gross per person. This guide also specified that government agencies wishing to utilise the CRGs would cover these payments.

It is important to note at this point that many participants did not consider the current level of compensation adequate since in many cases CRG members were required to undertake a lot of preparatory work prior to meeting. Also, earlier it was noted that an expectation of CRG members was to disseminate information to their respective communities however many participants perceived that the fee paid to CRG members did not adequately support dissemination. CRG members also noted that the fees were less than those paid to them members of other boards and advisory committees.

“...to begin with it was good, but then it remained the same flat fee for every year and as of late in the past couple of years it was a bit of a joke, especially when people read the stuff from documents and formulated reviews...see the process is this, they read the stuff, they come, the discussion is really robust...also they were expected to disseminate the information to their communities. They felt that \$100 odd was not a true reflection and also some of them know that other reference groups get a bit more than that.” (MPIA staff)

Contrarily many other participants reiterated the expectation that as representatives from specific communities, CRG members would be enabled to broadly disseminate information via existing community networks through their role as leaders within that community.

“And it was also people who were leaders in the community, who were connected so that we’d know they would have the capacity through their normal course of their work to be able to feed back and inform what’s going on...”

Some participants also perceived that much time was spent discussing fees at particular CRG meetings and as one participant claimed this negated the perceived purpose of involvement.

“I was under the assumption, you know when you listen to the election speeches that they didn't really care about the fees and then all of a sudden there was this turn-around, 'oh yeah we want the fees'. The fees for me shouldn't be an issue and I personally wish that we could scrap them because part of the time particularly for some groups of people their motivation was the fee...If that's [the fee] the sole motivator then we've got the wrong people...and that's the impression I got after the last election, for 2 weeks after it all they talked about was 'you're giving us a crappy fee'.”

Management: “...So it's a bit more cost...”

Management is another theme that emerged within this section on CRG processes, particularly since it is closely associated with 'cost'. Some participants claimed that the cost of CRG meetings to MPIA was minimal whilst others noted that MPIAs role in managing and arranging CRG forums provided additional expenses to the organisation by way of staffing, facilitation, food, time and preparation.

“...we do that, yes we organise, we set up, we send out letters, we send out documents then on that day we normally facilitate the meetings...so it's a bit more cost to the Ministry as well.”

It is important to note at this point that whilst the 'management' theme was briefly mentioned by participants at this point, it is consistently elaborated on throughout various sections within this review.

5.3. Zone Three: Positives and Negatives

This zone is separated into two sections. Section one identifies participants' perceptions on the effectiveness of CRGs and Section two explores perceived areas for improvement.

5.3.1 Section One: Perceptions of Effectiveness

Several dominant themes emerged within this section which included: effective examples and outputs, grass-roots understandings, relationships and links with the community, accessible resource and, effective management (a theme specific to Christchurch). Each of these is discussed below.

Examples and Outputs

Many participants exemplified the effectiveness of CRGs throughout the PCB. Some identified agencies that the CRGs had been involved with which included MSD, Police, MOH, CMDHB, NZQA, DOL, Corrections and the Ministry of Housing. Others identified specific consultations on the minimum wage review 2006, out of school services and Pacific housing design. In addition, sequential effective outcomes were also

noted, which include but are not limited to the establishment of Pacific units within MOH and CMDHB.

“There’s a whole lot of positive outcomes to the whole CRG engagement. In the police organisation, the Pacific responsiveness officer and his team, they came out of CRGs. You’ve got a big chunk of work that happened within the MOH and their Pacifica unit, CRGs were saying we need to have a Pacific unit within Health. Counties Manukau establishing a Pacific unit. You’ve got, um okay the education guys have always had a Pacifica something, but the CRGs were involved, they were involved in the NZQA um the action points, they’ve been involved in the Pacific housing design guide with the Ministry of Housing ah Housing Corp. Work and Income, they were part of the Pacific Wave establishment. These are things that I don’t think people realise that CRGs did a lot of that. Bigger houses, Housing Corp went through a process when they had their double houses put together and had two families living side by side. CRGs said ‘no you can’t do that, break the wall down the middle and make it a bigger house for those who have ten kids. So they did it, I think there’s a couple of thousand around New Zealand, CRGs put that on the table. Who would’ve known, and I’m sure there’s others as well, and I would say that everything that this Ministry commented on especially through the heyday of CRGs and the PCB, CRGs were involved one way or another their comments were filtered through our advice.”

Over all, many participants considered that the CRGs were effective when they had a specific purpose such as the PCB. Few participants discussed the effectiveness of CRGs beyond this strategy; however, it is important to note that requests have been received from agencies such as Te Papa and NZQA to continue engagement with the CRGs.

“Back when CRGs were formed there was a particular goal for them because most agencies didn’t have Pacific capacity, but if we went through the list of Pacific agencies who have new advisory groups that have been established since the CRGs you’ll find them everywhere. When CRGs started there were only 2 Pacific building strategies and now we’ve got 9. “

Grass-Roots Understandings

The majority of participants noted that the CRGs also provided a link between communities, MPIA and other government agencies. They were perceived as being knowledgeable from a grounded and ‘grass-roots’ perspective on the realities and needs of Pacific communities in New Zealand. A perspective that participants considered is a critical factor to MPIAs existence.

“Absolutely, these people are expert advisors and it’s because we are much smaller compared to other regions. These expert advisors are also very active in their community groups, they are again the shakers and the movers in their groups. Not only are these people learned and experts but they’re in touch with what’s going on grass roots and generally speaking agencies have always spoken really highly of the CRGs.”

Relationships and links with the community

The CRGs were also perceived as a mechanism by which to establish, build and maintain contact, communication, links and rapport with Pacific communities. In addition, they were a point of difference for MPIA in collaborative work with other agencies and

provided opportunities to educate others on the need for appropriate engagement with Pacific people in New Zealand.

“Having the right people there, having the right preparation for anybody who goes in. What’s also worked has been preparing the agency who’s gonna engage with them. Another lesson we learnt in the early stages is that agencies would show up and they would talk to them as if they were specialists or colleagues within their sector. And then they would get upset that the feedback that they got was not what they were looking for. See we didn’t get the feedback here, it would come to Wellington and all that Wellington was doing was that CRGs didn’t work, so Wellington MPIA became very critical of the thing. But the moment that we caught wind of that then we injected a process of “you must give them two weeks notice, you must come to us and we will help you with a way to engage with the people” and that even means breaking down a powerpoint from 20 slides to three...get rid of all the words, put important messages up, and if you’re gonna relate it to examples, give examples our people understand. They don’t understand these models of theory, I don’t think many people understand theoretical models unless you go through the learning process. So it was great, our agencies became wiser in the way they deal with communities...”

Accessible Resource for MPIA and other agencies

Many participants considered the CRGs a valuable resource for MPIA and other agencies. The excerpt below exemplifies the CRGs as a resource that is easily accessible and convenient. However, this excerpt also highlights that consultation with government agencies is prioritised over disseminating information.

“It’s very convenient to call the group to come together for agencies. It’s almost guaranteed that everybody will turn up particularly for consultation, not so much for disseminating information.”

Management

It is important to note at this point that effective internal management was a dominant theme that emerged only within the transcripts from Christchurch participants. Effective management was depicted in terms of administration, facilitation, evaluation, communication and educational support.

*“Without the **support from our office** I don’t think it would’ve been as successful as we are now. There’s a lot of support from our office, with the evaluation we design the template and we compile together, we send out the letters, we do follow-up, ring them up and we communicate with the agencies that if you want to engage with this service just talk to us and we’ll organise everything. I think that has been really effective. At the time, if for example it’s MoE, our person will sit down with the reference group 20 mins before the meeting and have a meet with them and talk about the key things to do with the document or strategy or whatever. We kind of have pre-meeting discussions. To be realistic not every member can make it but we’ve got a **proxy** as well. Once we send out the invite if the person knows that they can’t make it on that particular day then we contact the proxy and they let us know straight away so we can make sure that there’s somebody from that particular group. So that has been really effective.”*

Another aspect noted was that the Christchurch staff provided a safety mechanism around CRGs and would encourage the postponement of meetings if government agencies or internal processes impacted on the time that CRGs had for preparation.

“The process for us here is that we tell the agency that they’ve gotta send out the stuff two weeks prior to the meeting date. In the real world sometimes we get it a week (beforehand) but we are really hard on the agency, if it’s less than a week we say delay the meeting, postpone it, we need to give the members some time and we’ve told them and there’s that understanding between us and them that it’s gotta be two weeks. If it’s the day before, sometimes the delay is actually from us...perhaps the person that looks after the sector forgot or whatever but we have our weekly meeting and say look you must send this stuff or if it’s our fault then we contact the agencies and say can we postpone it for another week because we were flooded with so much stuff to do...perhaps the time when the SSP report is due to Wellington...so it’s a matter of being flexible but the process is that documents are to be sent two weeks prior to the meeting to give members enough time to read and absorb.”

One unique component of work within the Christchurch office has been to influence, encourage, support and empower ‘Leaders Councils’ for each of the Pacific Island nations. CRG representatives, each of which has a proxy in the event they are unable to attend meetings, are also members of their respective councils. This is particularly useful to disseminating information and providing informed advice and support to government bodies.

“The other thing we’ve done, see with the Tongans we actually helped them to formulate the Tongan leaders council and likewise with the Fijians we’re working on the Cook Islands and the Samoan and the others...I just attend and gather information or disseminate information to that group. So actually it’s good for them and it’s good for us as well in terms of gathering information and disseminating information as well... so what we did was encourage them...we were there to basically support...It’s not another organisation, it’s just a forum where all these leaders come together. The CRG reps belong to the leaders’ councils of their various ethnic groups...when it comes to disseminating information they just go directly to the leaders council rather than try to cover every single within their community.”

5.3.2 Section Two: Perceived Areas for Improvement

Several themes emerged within this section which included: Management, Feedback, Dissemination, Youth and Pan-Pacific perspectives. Each is discussed below.

Management: “We told them everything you say is gold...it’s not...”

Although examples of effective management have been identified within the Christchurch region, ‘management’ within Auckland and Wellington is perceived as being less effective and many participants from these regions highlighted a need to better manage relationships with the CRGs.

Several areas of improvement were generally noted which included:

- The provision of feedback to CRGs following a consultation meeting

“A lot were saying “How do we know what we said actually mattered?” sort of thing “How do we know what we said was incorporated into a cabinet paper?” We’re not doing a very good job of that[feedback].”

- Allocating an adequate amount of time as specified in the TOR to prepare for meetings

“A lot didn’t really know the subject matter, and even though MPIA was meant to send information two weeks prior, sometimes this did not occur and they were left with little time to prepare.”

- The provision of clear and transparent expectations, structures and processes

“Sometimes it was hazy in terms of what are we really after?Are we after that expert knowledge in a particular field or are we after someone who can present a grass roots community view on something?...and I think there was always that type of discrepancy in terms of what are we after.”

“The messages that we were putting forward to our communities were not clear enough. We told them, everything you say is gold...it’s not, of course with agencies you can tell...of course with anybody you can give them advice but it’s up to them if they take it on board. We were never clear with CRGs, yes you can say what you want to say them but it’s up to them if they want to accept what you say. Little things like that.”

- Timely payment

“The process was it was paid to the Ministry and then the Ministry would pay CRG members...and basically we were just a filter process in terms of paying CRGs...the whole management could have been done a lot better...in terms of late paying of CRG members...”

- Improved monitoring processes

“There was no routine explaining of what we expecting in CRGs and I normally go for WINZ talk with WINZ and that, there was no good connection of what did you do today, what did the WINZ say after our meeting, this type of area is really weak...when the CRGs is established MPIA should go deep into what is our role and then monitor what we are doing because if they don’t follow-up what we up to in CRG it’s just like going to a meeting, come home, it’s not like other organisations with letters arriving and all that...we are not like a valued bunch of people and like I said we should be monitor and follow-up...”

- Fulfilling MPIAs commitment to developing a communication strategy

“A huge failing on our part was supporting our CRGs, the communication thing. We made a huge promise to the CRGs in the middle of this process, we will help you create a communications plan, we never did. And that’s a huge let-down on our side.”

They felt there was a need for a more formal process and support for them and I know that on a couple of occasions there’s been attempts to put together a communications plan for the CRGs and I think we’ve stopped and started, stopped and started, tried and not

followed through and I know that the CRGs don't feel that they've had the right support, there were times we tried to train them but sometimes that training felt like they were bombarded with information of the sectors. Sometimes it might have just been as simple as securing a weekly radio slot for each CRG member just to feed back from their meeting, something as simple as that."

It is important to note at this point that in relation to ineffective communication, CRG members noted that whilst there are several Pacific advisory boards/councils within central and local government, these remain fragmented and there is no strategic approach to link these groups or to unify the messages/advice/support provided by each.

Inadequate feedback to agencies – Varied Skill Base

Many participants perceived that the skill base and thus advice provided by CRG members to government agencies varied considerably. One participant noted that the diverse skill sets within these groups was most notable with representatives from the smaller Island nations.

"With the smaller groups we don't have the right people on these boards, they don't understand what's required of them, they don't even understand the content of what's presented to them. That's been really tough, you sit there and you see that they don't have a clue and they're just bouncing off other people's comments which sometimes don't relate to what's discussed."

Dissemination to communities

Many participants queried whether CRG members disseminated information to their respective Pacific communities. Some noted this as a concern whilst others perceived that factors such as payment as well as support and clear communications from MPIA may have influenced this.

"Not going back to their communities – despite them being leaders, not going back to their communities cause we do on occasion get people coming back to us. Now these are people, they're fully aware of the role of CRGs so they expect CRGs to go back to them and they come to us and say we don't hear them, we don't ever see them...that's disturbing for us..."

Youth representation

Some participants also noted that there was a lack of youth representation on the CRGs and considered this highly ineffective in light of a highly youthful Pacific population and the fact that 60% of Pacific peoples are New Zealand-born.

"Our whole communications strategy needs to have a youth focus. This whole image of the Ministry is that we're on this journey, that we're still on canoes trying to get in here, that's not the case now, we're well established."

Pan-Pacific perspectives

Other participants noted that whilst the CRGs can be effective for providing Pan-Pacific perspectives and advice, these groups do not allow opportunities to gather in-depth ethnic-specific information.

“Pan-Pacific group but at the same time we want to encourage agencies if they want to go deeper then this is when they go to the various ethnic groups because a Pan-Pacific group you can’t speak for everybody can you...although the reps are really sharp they’re spot on...there is room to go to each ethnic group but rather than some agencies saying we have engaged with the CRGs that’s not the whole community that’s just a group of people, different experts and stuff.”

5.4. Zone Four: Needs assessment

This zone identified ambivalent and varied perspectives on MPIA’s current needs. This was primarily influenced by the fact that at the time of this review being conducted, priority setting within the organisation was underway.

Some participants indicated a need for clarification on MPIAs priorities before being in a position to best determine whether CRGs can assist us in achieving them and others did not consider this necessary. Regardless, participants generally perceived that as MPIA continues to evolve so too do our priorities.

“I understand we are going away from just being the facilitators of community engagement that we need to be good for more than that.”

Of those who expressed opinions independent of the current priority setting, it was consistently noted that there remains a need for communication with our Pacific communities. Participants commonly indicated that effective communication entails being well informed of community realities, but how we become informed provided ambiguous and varied responses.

“...our needs are to know what exactly is happening in the community. What really is happening out there? So even before research comes in, it’s about know what we’ve got, what is the landscape, what are the issues, is our ear really to the ground or are we finding out second hand from other people? So that’s what I’ve found out our needs are because we can always go to a policy table and say these are the needs of Pacific people but it’s embarrassing when another agency says well we’re working in the community and this is what our advisors have told us. And it shows us up! You know we’re supposed to be the eyes and ears, we’re supposed to be the leaders in this area and I wonder what our community capacity is... it’s simple it’s knowing what is going on, what is really happening, what’s out there and having a good sense of what the feel is and what the issues are, so basic, so complex and yet so necessary to us having real credibility and being able to provide advice rather than shooting off at the hip at meetings and that would be a real resource to policy.”

In light of the organisations evolving role, several participants perceived that whilst CRGs have a purpose *“CRGs are not one size fits all”*. Many considered that expert advisors would be most appropriate to provide advice and knowledge on and within

specific sectors. Some have already utilised this approach and opted for focus groups with expert advisors (some of whom are CRG members) rather than CRG meetings.

“...for other consultations I’ve sought out experts in particular fields and have advised other agencies that we can run focus groups and select the right people. And so I’ve always felt that we don’t want to be too locked in to our CRGs but there’s been that whole... on the one hand you have people within the Ministry saying ‘we always need to be promoting CRGs’ and I think well nah I don’t want to sing that song because CRGs are not one size fits all...and probably more than 50% of consultations in areas I’ve worked in. I’ve felt the best advice I can give an agency is not to direct them towards the CRG but to handpick particular people or to extract from the CRGs the people I know who have that particular knowledge...It’s easier for me to pick up the phone and invite these people to a focus group than to try to find money from an agency to organise a CRG.”

A theme closely connected with the use of expert advisors is the need to increase staff numbers particularly within the Communication and Relationships Directorate. Some participants indicated that the communications team has a potential to provide the community relationships and links that are so important to MPIAs existence.

“I personally believe we can let go of the CRGs...um with our current structure having a communications unit especially...I mean firstly, we need to recognise that we’re community ourselves, you know we’re from the Pacific community, so is there really a need for us to have a CRG? We should be the eyes and ears of our people simply because we are Pacific. Having said that, I think our need is to increase our staff particularly in [region deleted]. I mean we can do what the CRGs are doing if we had more staff. I think we have the capability to do the work that the CRGs were doing for us, I think we have the calibre of staff that can communicate and understand what’s being communicated. So I think it’s increasing staffing, increasing staffing in Auckland and Wellington and Christchurch...So having said that I would say that we can and I personally think that we should let go of the CRGs. In [region deleted] we’ve already established those relationships with key community groups and it’s just building on that, but that means increasing our staffing. And also having said that it is more expensive to have more staff compared to the \$100 fee that goes out to the CRG, but it is the quality that we so need.

It is important to bear in mind at this point that although the dominant discourse in this section seems to favour the formation of expert advisory groups, few participants blatantly stated that CRGs should become disestablished. One contrary view to utilising only expert advisors was that

“We can provide advice, but when it comes from a respected group such as the CRG I think it carries a bit more weight.”

5.5. Zone Five: Opportunities

This zone was purposed to gauge participants perspectives on whether CRGs should remain and if so what changes would be required, if any. It also sought to explore what an ideal process or tool would consist of if participants did not consider that there was a need for CRGs to remain.

Although the dominant discourse in question zone four favoured the formation of expert advisory groups, in this zone participants provided varied responses when asked directly whether CRGs should remain.

Three dominant themes emerged: keeping the CRGs, establishing CRG and Expert Advisory Groups, disestablishing CRGs in favour of Expert Advisory Groups. Additional emergent themes relating to an ideal process included: improving links with other advisory boards/committees, the role of the MPIA Communications Directorate, appropriate selection processes and youth representation.

Keep CRGs

The majority of participants indicated that there is a need within MPIA to keep CRGs. It was noted that these groups are an important mechanism by which to maintain links and rapport with Pacific communities. They were also considered a means of remaining grounded within the Pacific communities that we are purposed to serve. One participant also emotively expressed that it is unfair to disestablish CRGs since MPIA failed to support them.

“I’m thinking no, but then it’s not fair to say that because we haven’t, if anyone’s failed them it would be more due to our processes. But I totally believe in the whole concept but um I think we just need to do that work to be able to answer that question.”

It is important to highlight that all participants from Christchurch and the interviewed CRG members favoured the need to keep CRGs on the premise that concerns raised within section 5.3.2 are addressed.

*The CRG in Christchurch **must** remain. There are a lot of benefits we get from it. In terms of renaming it I’m all for changing the name because the CRG is an old thing, it’s something that is associated with PCB....If we are to disestablish it my question would be what’s better? Come up with something better to replace that then I’m keen...I’ve seen the added value that the CRG has been over the last few years.....for me the idea of one reference group working with us that we can call on and agencies want to engage, and those on these groups they come from their various different leaders or councils if you like...but we need to change the name, I’m all for that. We’re not talking PCB here, we’re looking into the future here and the whole concept is currently working well (in Christchurch)...**If it ain’t broke, don’t touch it!***

Establishing CRGs and Expert Advisory Groups

Whilst most participants expressed the need to keep CRGs they also supported the establishment of expert advisory groups. It was generally considered that MPIA would benefit from having both groups since each can provide differential advice, support and perspectives.

“I think it keeps you grounded and I think that’s the uniqueness of working for MPIA because we live in the communities that we serve. Focusing on specialists, yep we are meeting a need in terms of government agencies getting value for advice that they’re seeking on particular policies. But to a certain extent there needs to be a mechanism

which the Ministry is still connected to the communities that we serve...There's a balancing act because we will never be a mainstream organisation. We are a Pacific organisation and...we still have to maintain that connection, that cultural identity as a Pacific organisation and that's why government agencies come to us. We add a different dimension."

Disestablishing CRGs in favour of Expert Advisors

Some participants favoured the use of expert advisors over CRGs. It was noted that these groups were established in 2001 for the PCB and have since out-lived their original intent and purpose. However, the role of an advisory group was still considered necessary and participants indicated that the growing number of Pacific expert advisors in our communities should be identified (many of whom are known to staff and others), engaged and consulted with, on an as needed basis.

"...there's a whole lot of switched on Pacific people out there that are academics that are also, they've done the hard yards and they've done well. But we know who they are, these are people we can approach and tap into and maybe bring in on a regular basis, or as we need to and bounce ideas of them or to use them as a measuring stick to make sure that this piece of work that we want to support it is going to make a difference. Are CRGs still critical to that? Um, my personal opinion is that the CRGs as they were established back in 2001 have lived their purpose. Does the Ministry need an advisory group? Yes they do."

It was also emphasised that such a group requires appropriate management and resources as well as a defined purpose.

"Needs to be well managed, can't be haphazardly. We started with all good intentions but it lost its way. The expert advisor group should be there only if we need it, if you don't need it, don't have it...They need to be there for a purpose and if they know that they will achieve that purpose... I'd like it if someone came up and said I've got something to give you and we can't just give it twice a year. It's gotta be a constant thing."

Another view mentioned within this section which is consistent with earlier mention of CRGs as convenient and accessible, is that they may also provide a tokenistic method of consultation with Pacific communities for other agencies. In this light, preferences were for expert advisors to provide informed advice, knowledge and constructive criticism. This was also considered a contribution to establishing MPIA as a knowledge-based organisation.

the majority of consultations I've been on I've leaned more towards the experts only because I want to make sure they've come out feeling like they've got some knowledge...any of the agencies that want to tick boxes and for many the CRGs have been the easiest way to go...we'll pay a couple of hundred dollars and some sausage rolls and we at least we can say we've provided...may it's convenient maybe it's a good thing in terms of providing agencies who wouldn't know where else to go...but I'm leaning more in my experience toward the whole expert thing...I want us to provide the best most informed advice by Pacific peoples who know what they're talking about so agencies have confidence to come back to us and then we build our reputation as being the leaders in that area."

Other participants also noted that the establishment of an expert advisory group requires appropriate communications strategies to become known and understood to both government agencies and wider communities.

I'm more in favour of an expert group but at the same time this expert group needs to be known by everybody, both community and government or again it will be another waste of time, no-one will call on us for them. And having an expert group, we don't want them to be over-used for their skills, if you have a group that sits there and finds there not called on at any time that can be deflating and discouraging and they'll decide to pull out all together. And if others get asked they may say no don't bother and so we'll lose our experts all together.

Links with other advisory boards

Many participants expressed the important of MPIA having links with other local and national government Pacific advisory boards as this may avoid repetition and provide an alternative mechanism to gain community perspectives and insights on particular issues.

"Yes, it also means that we're not doubling up on things so we're not just one of a raft of different groups in the community but let's map out what's the landscape for community consultation or community advice. That's almost an exercise we need to do first, what is out there in terms of community resource and what are the different levels and it would be interesting to see what would be the most appropriate one for us to link into because you've got the local government ones each agency has got it's own and instead of knocking our heads against a wall like with education they've got an extensive group of community advisors, corrections have their community people out there."

MPIA Communications Directorate

The majority of participants considered it ideal for MPIA's communication and relationship directorate to engage closely with communities. The excerpt below exemplifies the need for MPIA staff to be informed of community realities.

I believe the comms team, I believe we should be focusing on making it our business to know everything and not letting other agencies know more than we do. It's embarrassing and it's a real poor look for us when we sit around a table, it undermines our whole purpose for being there and the moment another agency, a Palagi official from another agency knows more about what's happening on the ground you might as well vacate your seat and leave the room...We should be the first ones shooting out that information, the reality is I don't know how realistic it is.

The following excerpt indicates that whilst the communications team is important to community connectedness for the organisation, additional resource and strategies are required. This excerpt also indicates that communications and information are not only required internally but also externally for government agencies and the wider community.

"...we can't rely upon newsletters they're not enough, the readership is small...I doubt if we reach the whole Pacific population. It's almost like a little clique of who gets the newsletter and they get it and think it's really great and that's cool... Now out of the Pacific population, I don't think all of them want to know what we do, they don't need us and that's why they do so well. You know, we're here to help those who can't help

themselves, honestly that's what we do, we're not here to help those who've already helped themselves cause they've done it without us. We're also here to inform those non-Pacific people the value of Pacific people in New Zealand. And I think that's the two sides of the communications campaign that we're still coming to grips with how to do. ... They're all aware of the CRGs and they're very critical of the CRGs because of the communication backwards and forwards was not as great as it should've been. We don't want to get in the same situation where the new animal falls under the same criticism of the current animal. That whatever we end up with is not taken seriously by the community.

Some participants voiced their opinions on how communications strategies could be enhanced. In particular, the excerpt below exemplifies a common perception that additional communications opportunities would include better use of all forms of media. This excerpt also notes that increased face-to-face contact with communities, whilst labour intensive, is required.

I would say that the original concept of the newsletter was it was a community notice board and that was good because we had nothing. What we're seeing now is that it's becoming an information exchange board, almost like a report card of what the ministry's doing, it's our status report but it's also what's great in the community and what's valuable about Pacific people in New Zealand. So the readership should be broadened not just to Pacific people within agencies but to everybody...We've gotta be on TV, we gotta be on radio, you know all those forms of media, we gotta be out there...A fortnightly newsletter, but that's quite hard to do, very very busy. The next thing we have to do in tandem with that is informing the wider community. They need to take it very seriously because then they will see that whatever advice we give using the sounding board of experts or whatever it is has a lot of strength behind it. There will always be people that question individuals. That interaction with the community is critical, how we do that I don't know. More face to face, everything will be labour intensive and it's almost it's own campaign on it's own..."

Appropriate Selection Processes

Another consistent theme throughout this review is that MPIA requires an advisory group to remain grounded within the realities facing our Pacific communities. Many participants however indicated a need to address concerns that were identified with the selection of CRG representatives (see Section 5.2) and provided alternative opportunities to overcome these. The excerpt below implies that MPIA should take a more informal and proactive role in selecting a smaller number of appropriate members who can provide alternative advice to those considered expert advisors.

How would we put them [advisory group] together? Again I don't know. If we have learnt something from the last 7/8 years is that if you leave it to the community and you don't give them the right information to put forward some people they will put forward their emotional choices of the traditional leaders. Nothing wrong with traditional leaders but we need to have a combination of traditional standards as well as someone who can make it in the Western society, we live in New Zealand we don't live in the Island. The paradise of the Islands is there, but this is New Zealand and our people need to live and breathe and work here. A way that we can create a little group for us, I mean I don't think we need to have an established group because of all of these experts that are out there, it's very easy for us to have a piece of work that we need advice on or have a sounding board on and we can go and shoulder tap and bring in half a dozen."

Youth representation

Many participants expressed that an ideal tool and process for MPIA would include youth and provide appropriate mentoring and leadership opportunities with those on the expert advisory groups. It was considered that the communications and information directorate could focus energies on this group and profile their experiences on the mentoring/leadership programme.

Our whole communications strategy needs to have a youth focus. This whole image of the Ministry is that we're on this journey that we're still on canoes trying to get in here, that's not the case now, we're well established. ... So we've gotta drop a lot of things that were you know, and I think those things are what the youth think of "that's why I won't go to the ministry because they're still focused on getting my grandparents here" you know it shouldn't be a case for the ministry but it still is. We're not in line with what's happening out in the communities, particularly for young people. We know what their issues are when they come on the news and then negative and it's about changing that round and how are we going to do that with the CRGs I don't know, cause when you look at it with experts, we feel that we need experts in the field we still need a youthful voice whether their an expert or not, they still have to be there. There are youth that are doing for themselves, maybe get them on this expert group, we definitely need youth on board.

6. Conclusions and Implications

The Project Brief for this review has one overall objective which is to:

- Explore the extent to which CRGs meet the *current* needs (i.e. two-way communication with Pacific communities, provision of specialist knowledge and intelligence on emerging issues) of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs.

The purpose of the interviews was to examine the purpose, role, effectiveness and future possibilities of the CRGs. Based on the evidence provided in the background literature and qualitative interviews, 3 potential scenarios have emerged. Each is discussed below and potential implications are highlighted for consideration.

Scenario 1: Establish CRGs and Expert Advisory Groups

Evidence within this review identifies that CRGs are generally considered an important link between MPIA, government agencies and Pacific communities. In exploring this theme further, it becomes apparent that participants consistently emphasised the need for a formal link to Pacific communities. Participants interviewed also identified the need for informed and knowledgeable advice through expert advisory groups. Overall, ambivalent views on the need for CRGs throughout this review have eventuated in the perceived need for an appropriate advisory body(ies) to meet the current needs of MPIA.

In the event that MPIA opts for this scenario several implications must be considered.

- Selection of membership for the groups
- Clarity of purpose and role for each group

- Clarity about how groups will be funded to cover costs in terms of administration and facilitation
- Resolving potential conflict between groups
- Section 5.3.2 identifies several areas for improvement and whether MPIA has the capacity to fulfil these is to be determined
- Consistent selection criteria must be developed which address concerns raised in section 5.2.

Scenario 2: Disestablish CRGs and develop Expert Advisory Groups

This review also identifies the need for an expert advisory group that consists of key people with in-depth knowledge, understanding and experience within specific sectors to provide evidence-based opinions and advice to MPIA and respective government agencies. It also highlights some participants' perceptions that such a group is more apt than CRGs and better suited to the current perceived needs of MPIA. In the event that MPIA opts for this scenario several implications must be considered.

- Heavily reliant on the communications and relationships team performing and providing close links with Pacific communities
- Requires more FTEs within the communications and relationships directorate
- Requires a clear and specific purpose
- Requires improved internal management
- MPIA is to select representatives. In doing this it is necessary to:
 - o Develop a database of experts within each sector
 - o Identify those already involved with other advisory groups
 - o Engage with those who are not already involved with other advisory groups
 - o Identify emerging experts within specific sectors
- Incorporate a youth mentoring/leadership programme
- Requires an appropriate exit strategy particularly since some CRG members may be selected as experts.

Scenario 3: Keep CRGs

Evidence within this review exemplifies instances where CRGs have been an effective mechanism for communication, connectedness, advice and support and therefore provides an option to maintain the current structure. In the event that MPIA opts for this scenario several implications must be acknowledged.

- Effectiveness is primarily based on examples provided during the *PCB*, a time in which the CRGs had a clear purpose and role
- Section 5.3.2 identifies several areas for improvement and whether MPIA has the capacity to fulfil these is to be determined
- Addressing the concerns identified in section 5.3.2 does not cover the issues raised in relation to selection criteria

- Lessons from Christchurch on effective management, establishment and maintenance of CRGs should be considered by other regions
- Whilst the concept of CRGs is supported a renaming of the groups is also suggested.

7 Appendix 1

- *Zone One - Historical Background*
 - When and Why were CRGs established?

- *Zone Two - Process*
 - How many exist?
 - What is expected of members?
 - Selection criteria?
 - Cost?

- *Zone Three - Positives & Negatives*
 - What has been effective? (what worked?)
 - What has been less effective? (what didn't work so well?)

- *Zone Four – Needs Assessment*
 - What are perceived MPIA (current) needs?
 - To what extent do CRGs meet these needs?

- *Zone Five - Opportunities*
 - What is the ideal tool/process?
 - Should CRGs remain?
 - What change(s) to CRGs are required, if any?