

Inner-City Association: AGM 2011: Chair's report

- Particular thanks for Committee members for their work over the last year. When you have a good team around you it's all about what's possible rather than what's not possible. I've really appreciated the enthusiasm the team has had for the group.
- Also a special thanks to our members and supporters. Without your continued involvement we wouldn't be able to play the role we play in helping to bring people together to discuss the issues of concern and interest in the community.
- While we're still a young group and we're still finding our way I believe we've made some significant progress over the last year. We're establishing ourselves as a key and serious group to be consulted – particularly with the WCC – and the challenge now is to broaden that recognition out in the wider inner-city community – both at the business and resident level.
- It's also good to see groups like the recently formed Cuba St Quarter Association keen to align themselves with the ICA. This all helps provide critical mass and the sharing of ideas across the many areas of shared interest.
- Rather than recap on the useful discussions we've had over the last year – including what I thought was a pretty successful councillor's debate head of the local govt elections – I want to focus on the future and update everyone on a couple of initiatives we are taking forward.
- Earlier last month the Inner-City Association together with the Newtown Business Group bid for some WCC funds to employ a part-time coordinator to build awareness among inner-city residents and businesses in the inner-city, and businesses in Newtown, of the existence and work of, the Inner-City Association and Newtown Business Group respectively.
- While we weren't successful in obtaining all the funds we thought we would need the WCC has agreed to provide around \$7000 for the work we have in mind. This is an excellent result. Over the next few weeks we will develop a plan to take this forward – and provide further information by e-mail – but if anyone knows of a person with a marketing/comms type background looking for some minimal part-time work then please let me know.
- As many will appreciate like any volunteer organisation the ICA faces the ongoing issue of sustaining the interest and engagement of busy people and building broader awareness and support for its work within pretty

significant time and resource constraints. This funding should help overcome this – at least initially – so we'll want to maximise the benefit we get from the funding.

- I'm going to suggest that we form a small working group to take this project forward and I would love to hear from people keen to assist.
- The other piece of work we have been progressing is in concert with Enterprise Miramar Peninsula – a relatively new and successful group based out in Miramar – and the Newtown Business Group.
- We are going to make a joint annual plan submission to the WCC which outlines an opportunity to better cater for the needs of the very many SMEs in the Wellington area.
- There are two parts to the submission – which we can provide by e-mail for those interested:
- That consideration be given to resourcing a liaison position within council to work with SMEs and business associations. There are examples of this at Porirua and Lower Hutt where such coordinators help local businesses and suburban centres to develop marketing plans, fill empty shops and improve facilities. This could be a single position that would become a 'one stop' shop for SMEs in Wellington; and
- That the contestable economic grants fund is not reduced (which is what the WCC is proposing) but maintained at the status quo of \$50,000.00, given there is little grass roots economic funding available for SMEs.
- We're suggesting the WCC make a long term strategic investment in the area of Small and Medium Business in Wellington, and firmly believe that the benefits would easily outweigh the costs given the positive impact on business activity, rates etc. It would also change the perception of Councils role i.e. from one of 'big brother' to one that is of partnership and facilitation.
- So some exciting times ahead and I look forward to playing a role until the end of the year when I'm heading to Melbourne to take up some academic opportunities. Given my imminent move I've decided to step down as Chair to ensure the group has the continuity it needs. But I very much look forward to supporting the new Committee in their work over the coming year. Thanks for your support.