

Partnering with the enemy to advance asset management

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The Future of Infrastructure Management or Naivety Awaiting Catastrophe?

In 2014 Tararua District Council (TDC) entered into a partnership with Downer NZ for management of the district's road network and water, wastewater and stormwater reticulation infrastructure. The five year unincorporated joint venture alliance contract offers a truly collaborative single delivery team approach, driving efficiencies and 'best for asset' decision making in an area somewhat financially constrained.

Moving from a very traditional road network management model, where network management professional services were managed in house and physical works were delivered by a Council owned company, to a true partnership based on trust and integrity with a large private sector company could go either way - a great result generating benefits for both parties and the wider community, or a complete disaster with increasing costs, reduced levels of service, and unhappy stakeholders.

The Tararua Alliance has now been operating for four years, with Council governance endorsement to negotiate a further ten years. The presentation will discuss key learnings and challenges from both organisation's perspectives, for the past, present and future.

These include;

- Consultation; communicating the change and getting buy in.
- Culture; embedding staff from two very different organisations into one team, expecting them to deliver excellence, with a focus on staff behaviour and attitude.
- Performance; utilising a performance framework that drives development, continuous improvement and excellence.
- Stakeholder Engagement; reducing negative perceptions based on a lack of understanding, especially when the Alliance Manager (also manager for road and 3waters reticulation infrastructure) is employed by the contractor.

Sustainability and Security; ensuring the model is successful, whilst maintaining and enhancing TDC staff capability if the alliance fails.