

Wellington Officially Declared # 100 Safe Community



Wellington City has been officially declared a 'Safe Community' by the Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand (SCFNZ) on behalf of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Collaborating Centre on Community Safety Promotion, thereby becoming the 100th place in the world to gain such recognition. Wellington City is the fifth community in New Zealand and to date the only capital city in the world to hold this prestigious award.

The accreditation as a Safe Community, within the WHO Safe Community Network, is the result of years of collaborative partnerships and coordination which have been successfully established between the Wellington City Council, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), The NZ Police and the Capital and Coast District Health Board. Wellington City has worked in many areas of injury and crime prevention. Community participation and working together with local government and non-government organisations has been the key to the successful development and implementation of these programmes. The key outcomes for the city has been reducing the injury and violence burden and improving overall perceptions of community safety. The designation ceremony was a wonderful celebration of what has been achieved to date.

In 2005, there was a 5.7% reduction in reported crime in Wellington City compared to 2004. This was a record four-year low. Wellington Police and the Council believe their partnership has helped achieve this reduction. A 30% reduction in traffic crashes and a 60% drop in burglaries have also occurred in Wellington City over the past 12 months. The Mayor of Wellington City Kerry Prendergast said *"the challenge now is to build on the successes and put more resources into making the suburbs and local neighbourhoods as safe as the city centre"*. Wellington City Area Commander Inspector Peter Cowan stated that he considers it a privilege for Wellington Police to be involved with the International Safe Communities accreditation process. Inspector Cowan stated *"I have no doubt in my mind that this accreditation recognises the outstanding manner in which local and central government agencies can work together to achieve a safer community"*.

Capital & Coast District Health Board Chief Executive Margot Mains stated that agencies strengthening links at a neighbourhood level have been critical in obtaining the Safe Community status: *"By promoting social inclusion, employment and training opportunities, good housing better services, and better city and neighbourhood design, we can reduce injury and crime, and improve the health of our families and communities"* said Ms Mains. At the designation ceremony, Ms Mains stated that *"evidence-based initiatives such as the WHO Safe Communities model which directly reduces the health burden will always be supported by District Health Boards"*.

ACC General Manager, Injury Prevention and Client Services Darrin Goulding reminded those attending the designation ceremony that agencies have taken action to reduce injuries from road crashes, falls and alcohol-related harm. *"When walking over to attend this ceremony, I was reminded of the many and significant environmental changes to improve safety that have occurred in and around Wellington City over the past 5 years. Sustainable changes do not happen overnight but require ongoing commitment. We look forward to continued developments to make the city a safer place and aim to ensure the focus on safety to prevent injuries is front-of-mind in planning the future of New Zealand's Capital City"*, said Mr Goulding.

Spokesperson for Wellington City Council, Laurie Gabites commented that *"Being a designated Safe Community means for Wellington that we are a city committed to identifying many ways of ensuring people can feel safe at any time and that this enhances the quality of life for those who work, live and play here."*

In conclusion, a pleasing aspect of this designation ceremony has been the tremendous efforts undertaken by the Council to ensure that members of the public were informed of Wellington's safe community status including: specifically designed and informative booklets being developed and distributed to relevant organisations and individuals and extensive media (television radio & newspapers) coverage occurring.

Safe Communities Foundation New Zealand (SCFNZ)

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Certifying Centre of the WHO Safe Community Network; Affiliate Safe Community Support Centre of the WHO Collaborating Centre on Community Safety Promotion; and Affiliate Centre with Certifying Authority of the International Safe Schools Movement.