



## **Joint Statement from CABNZ and CAB Marlborough regarding Council support for Citizens Advice Bureau**

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is part of the fabric of communities of Aotearoa New Zealand; underpinning participation, resilience, and democracy through creating informed and active citizens. The service is non-targeted and available to all.

This makes the CAB an essential service in ensuring community well-being, which has been reinstated as a core purpose of local councils<sup>1</sup>.

### **About CAB Marlborough**

CAB Marlborough acknowledges the Marlborough District Council (MDC) support it has received since it began in 1979. Since 2012 we have received an annual \$7,100 contribution towards rent and operations. We are requesting that the annual amount increase to \$17,100.

As with many not-for-profit, volunteer-run organisations, CAB Marlborough has always prided itself on 'running on the smell of an oily rag'. However, we find that financial constraints are beginning to impact the effectiveness of our service. In particular, we would like to increase the size of our office to provide a private space for client interviews when necessary. We are also aware that our one part-time paid role is woefully under-resourced at 10 paid hours per week.

### **Strategic Partnership**

CAB Marlborough seeks to develop a strategic relationship with the MDC. One potential area for cooperation is a Community Listings database. We have a database of 504 community organisations and services that connects the community with opportunities regarding recreation, education, volunteering, charity, health, the environment and culture. Our service is referenced on the inside cover of the MDC's own publication 'Get connected'. Our database is proactively updated by our volunteers and entries are contacted and revised annually. Together we could create a more efficient inclusive resource.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/promoting-well-being-local-communities>



### **Face to face**

The personal touch is craved by many members of our community. With an accelerated growth of the digital divide some members of our community are becoming increasingly isolated . A significant number of our clients (22% identified in a 2019 survey) are digitally deprived and, effectively, have reduced access to local and national government, information, and commercial services. Some have no computer knowledge while others lack access to a computer, printer or the internet. Those unfamiliar with the internet are severely disadvantaged in finding information online even if a computer is made available. Many people are intimidated or lack the confidence to fill in online forms, don't understand the instructions, or just want to interact with someone face to face. This need is increasing and is now putting pressure on our office and interview space. It is a service we are determined to continue and we note that migrants, those with reading difficulties, and the elderly are among those most appreciative of face to face interaction.

### **Volunteer Value**

CAB Marlborough has a team of 35 dedicated, well trained, and experienced volunteers from all walks of life. They are supported by a 10 hour per week co-ordinator. The volunteers provide 4,072 hours of in-person and phone service to the community each year. Costed at the minimum wage, the value of this work is \$81,440 per annum.

The flexibility of the volunteers allows them to be mobilised in all circumstances. This was evident during the COVID-19 lockdown when the CAB service was supported by volunteers working from home. This flexibility could also be used in other situations, for example, to provide mobile or pop-up CAB services, in Picton for example.

### **More About CABNZ**

The Citizens Advice service has been robustly and independently reviewed by PricewaterhouseCoopers who found that the Citizens Advice service of "accessible, accurate,



confidential and independent advice empowers [people] to solve problems, understand their rights, access services, and enhance their personal and community well-being”.<sup>2</sup>

They also found our service is unique when compared with other community organisations especially in our ability to reach the most vulnerable.<sup>3</sup>

CABs represent a unique enduring partnership between central government (which funds essential infrastructure to all CABs via our national body), local government (which provide operational funding to their local CABs) and civil society: volunteers coming together to support the human rights of people in their community as part of an independent non-government organisation.

CABNZ, the Citizens Advice national body, holds the position that because of the unique nature and role of the Citizens Advice service in supporting community well-being that we should be recognised as a strategic partner of Council, and supported with specific non-contestable funding, as we are supported by the MDC.

CABNZ provides each bureau with critical infrastructure that the Council does not have to fund, this is funded by central government. Without the infrastructure provided by CABNZ (IT system, learning and development, policies, service design, quality assurance), CABs could not continue to deliver their service. Conservatively this infrastructure has a value of \$25,000 per CAB service delivery site.

### **More about the PwC Report**

In 2018 Wellington City Council asked PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to conduct a detailed review of the Wellington CAB service. The report highlighted the unique nature of the CAB, particularly in reaching the most vulnerable. While this particular report was focused on the Wellington CAB, its analysis of the core CAB service applies to all CABs across the country. The report is publicly available at [www.cab.org.nz/pwc](http://www.cab.org.nz/pwc).

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<sup>2</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers, Citizens Advice Bureau Wellington Service Review, December 2018, page 6

<sup>3</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers, Citizens Advice Bureau Wellington Service Review, December 2018, page 25