

Workshop 2



Developing themes

What will a well-informed, civically engaged New Zealand look like in 2030?
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The second workshop of *The Civics and Media Project* was held at the University of Auckland and saw more than 50 participants come together to address three key questions:

- What roles do we hope and expect media to play in civic life in 2030?
- How will the notion of 'civics' and 'civic engagement' be expanded by 2030?
- How will education prepare young New Zealanders to be engaged citizens in 2030?

The university's Acting Dean of Arts, **Associate Professor Bernadette Luciano**, welcomed the attendees by posing the question that would be the theme of the day: 'What will a well-informed, civically-engaged New Zealand look like in 2030?' She pointed out that the tools to engage with this future need to be developed for business, government and civil society, but most importantly, for the young people who will be the adults of tomorrow.

Workshop Convenor **Dr Gavin Ellis**, senior lecturer in Media, Film and Television at the University of Auckland, reminded the participants that they needed to disengage themselves from the nature of future technology and, paraphrasing the recently deceased American baseball player Yogi Berra, told them ‘it is hard to make predictions, especially about the future.’ He also pointed out that while civics knowledge has been found to be strong in high decile schools, it is ‘alarmingly low’ in low decile schools, posing a danger of creating an underclass.

Gavin Ellis’s PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).

The Strategic Advisor to the CEO of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, **Todd Kriebel**, then reported on Workshop 1. He said it brought up mixed evidence, both good and bad, and illuminated quite a few unanswered questions.

Todd Kriebel’s PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).

In light of this context, the workshop properly began. It consisted of a series of plenary panels and breakout sessions on media, civics and education, which are summarised below.

THE SESSIONS

Future Focus – Voices of the Voters of Tomorrow

The future focus of *The Civics and Media Project* was emphasised in this first plenary session, which saw Radio New Zealand presenter **John Campbell** in conversation with a panel of five engaging and inspiring intermediate school students – **Luc Taillon, Ishannita Chaudhuri, Louis Rozas, Mia Stewart, and Kenya Santamaria**. Together they discussed how they see New Zealand now and in the future.

In 2030, our panel of five young people will be in their mid-20s. They’ll be setting out on or settling into their careers (the first of several, if the seers of tomorrow are correct). And they will have voted in three elections. So what do they see in their futures?

All of them are concerned about the environment, and the damage that climate change might do to it. Luc Taillon thought that the world of 2030 could be like the rubbish-strewn wasteland portrayed in the movie *WALL·E*. While Ishannita Chaudhuri worried that the ozone layer might have disappeared and they’d all be wearing sunsuits.

But they recognise that action needs to be taken: ‘Someone needs to step up and say we have a problem and we need to fix it’ said Louis Rozas. Luc said that we need to bring it to the attention of the Prime Ministers, the Presidents and the United Nations. Ishannita said we need to find other ways of producing our energy and electricity.

They're not fans of TV news: it's 'depressing' and 'kind of scary' and 'the media makes things negative'. But they're still positive, stating that we need to take care of the poor and homeless because they don't have a voice; we need the views of everybody; and we need to think about what we do before we do it.

Moderator John Campbell summed them up with his trademark effusiveness as 'lovely, ethical kids'. Workshop convenor Gavin Ellis pointed out that the whole day was not about the adults attending, but about these citizens of tomorrow: 'We need to come up with something that reflects their anxieties and aspirations. How can we empower our young people?'

Media

Plenary Chair: **Professor Annie Goldson**, Disciplinary Area Head in Film, Television and Media Studies, University of Auckland

Breakout Facilitator: **Dr Maria Armoudian**, Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, University of Auckland

A key metaphor for our democratic society came up early in the discussion, when participants began to think of society as a living body. Just as a body needs nutritious sustenance to grow and thrive, society needs the information provided by quality civic journalism to maintain good health and resilience. Throughout the day, in this plenary panel, breakout session, and full group discussion, participants debated the function of journalism in a democratic society, and the institutional arrangements needed for it to fulfil this function.

First, MediaWorks Group Head of News **Mark Jennings** pointed out that democracy must be 'learned' by successive generations. To support this learning, he called for the creation of a public broadcaster combining TV One and Radio New Zealand, with emphasis on a digital platform, which may or may not have advertising. But in exchange for a public information provider that would not compete for advertising dollars, he argued that there should be an obligation on commercial operators to provide meaningful news and current affairs.

Radio New Zealand Head of Content **Carol Hirschfeld** reminded the audience of the basic requirement of journalism to hold power to account, and emphasised the ability (and therefore responsibility) of public service media to maintain standards across the news media ecology.

Finally, **Hannah Bartlett**, a postgraduate journalism student from Auckland University of Technology called for greater media literacy education in schools, and highlighted the power of media to engage youth as participants in civic processes and developed the media diet analogy.

Working on the foundation of these remarks, contributors to the media breakout session noted that journalism has a duty to inform the public about how to engage with democratic processes, and must strive to utilise platforms and provide tools that foster such participation. Journalism must contribute to the public's knowledge, facilitating the dissemination and contextualisation of information that enables New Zealand citizens to engage meaningfully and productively in politics, society and culture.

Media outlets should strive to establish enduring credibility, creating environments that facilitate long-form, investigative reporting and in-depth analysis of society. Quality journalism must become resilient to commercial pressures, and should rely on a diverse range of funding sources (e.g. government, subscribers, levies, license fees and donations) to ensure sustainable financial support. New Zealand journalism must prioritise a broad and fair representation of our society through inclusion of a multitude of diverse perspectives, issues, sources, and locations.

Ultimately, for media to fulfil its role as both a key stakeholder and facilitator of a fully democratic New Zealand.

A vision for media in 2030:

- A full range of information is available, enabling all New Zealanders to actively engage in shaping their society.
- The media industry is free from governmental, corporate and commercial pressures.
- All sectors of society, all platforms, and all resources act together to support the umbrella vision above.

Civics

Plenary Chair and Breakout Facilitator: **Dr Paul Taillon**, senior lecturer in History, University of Auckland

Former adman and Waitakere City Mayor **Bob Harvey** kicked off the Civics panel by saying that we live in age of fear, terrorism and environmental degradation, and that New Zealand is seen as a haven of safety and security. But he also said that we can't be blasé about our future: 'We need to go to 2030 right now'.

Fellow panellist **Sandra Grey** of the Tertiary Education Union pointed out that we don't need to reach a complete consensus, because if we do it will make life hard for those who live outside it. She also said that although everyone can now have a part in reporting the news, 'good journalists work hard at being good journalists' – not every citizen is a good journalist. Good quality reporting goes on within ethical boundaries, and the area within those boundaries 'is not the blogosphere.'

Ryan Mearns from Generation Zero – a group set up to combat climate change through innovative transport solutions – said civil society organisations need to educate journalists. He also pointed out that today's young people are not 'joiners' like the Jaycees and Zonta members of the past, but prefer to engage in a 'softer' way, which is often online.

In his summary, the panel chair reiterated that the conversation revolved around what a civically engaged society would look like. Challenges to it include inequality, media fragmentation, changing demographics and lack of cultural diversity.

They articulated a vision for civic engagement in 2030:

- Citizens are interested in and feel a strong sense of attachment to their communities.
- All citizens have access to the tools and the information they need and there are no barriers to participation.
- The citizenry is active and is able to engage in healthy democratic debate.

Education

Plenary Chair and Breakout Facilitator: **Associate Professor Carol Mutch**, Critical Studies in Education at the University of Auckland

The education discussion was structured around the triad of content, student learning, and teacher pedagogy. The dominant theme was that civics – in its wider sense including citizenship and social responsibility – must have a higher priority within the school curriculum.

Deanna Johnson of Nga Iwi School in Mangere began the panel, noting that schools must practice the inclusive democracy they teach, encouraging collaboration and growing student voices.

Bronwyn Houliston of McAuley High School in Otahuhu brought up the perspectives of her Māori and Pasifika students. While the students shared a passion for social justice, they also felt alienated from parliamentary and council processes. Intergenerational and structural forces were seen as impediments to engaging in civic life and accessing civic knowledge.

Brent Coutts from Baradene College in Auckland lamented that in a crowded curriculum, civics education effectively ends at age 13 for most students. He cited examples of how teachers were instead incorporating civics learning into other subjects, emphasising social responsibility as part of all learning areas.

The breakout session group discussion arrived at a solid consensus: civics, citizenship, social responsibility, and political literacy must be elevated in New Zealand education.

They articulated a vision for civics education in 2030:

- Students are empowered as citizens, as family members, as iwi, and as members of local, national, and global communities.
- Citizenship is an integral part of school curricula.
- Families, iwi, communities and government work together to educate citizens from pre-school level, throughout primary and secondary education, and beyond.

Final discussion

Facilitator: **Dr Claire Meehan**, lecturer in Criminology, University of Auckland

The final plenary session heard reports from the breakout workshops outlining the vision statements they had agreed upon. The session also included an open-mic discussion with an 'Oprah-like' walkabout by Dr Meehan. The contributions from the floor emphasised the need for equity and for the ability to affect change.

Wendy McGuinness, chief executive of the McGuinness Institute, distilled the day's discussions into an umbrella vision statement:

To ensure all New Zealanders in 2030 have an accurate understanding of the world they live in, and the ability and skills to bring about change.