

# Westington Conversations

KIA WHAI TAKE I PŌNEKE

Handbook for conversation facilitators

V1.0

(Last edited: 30/10/2019)

### **About this booklet**

This booklet is a work in progress – it's being co-created by the community that is working together to support Wellington Conversations.

If you find any mistakes, errors, or things that could be better about it, please let the Wellington Conversations team know. You can email the team with any feedback on: [connect@wellingtonconversations.nz](mailto:connect@wellingtonconversations.nz)

To learn more about Wellington Conversations, visit the project website: [www.wellingtonconversations.nz](http://www.wellingtonconversations.nz)

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**Note on printing:** This document is formatted for A5, half of an A4. It will look best if you print it as a two-page spread on each A4 sheet – or as a booklet.

## Welcome

If you're reading this, then you're probably a member of the community of conversation facilitators that is working together to support the Wellington Conversations project. If you've just found this booklet lying around – feel free to get in touch and come along to the next training!

Wellington Conversations depends on volunteers - to run the conversations, to invite their friends and neighbours along, and to collaboratively craft the experiences that Wellingtonians have when they come to an event. We really appreciate you and your time – and we hope this booklet and the other facilitator resources will help you on your journey and experience.

- The Wellington Conversations team

## FAQs about Wellington Conversations

### **What exactly is Wellington Conversations?**

Wellington Conversations is about conversations that connect people who live near each other. It's a free event series where people are invited to connect with each other over facilitated conversations about topics that matter to us as Wellingtonians. The conversation topics are chosen from community suggestions and contributions and change monthly.

The conversations are relaxed yet structured, with a new topic each month. Events happen at multiple locations (cafés and other public spaces) throughout the month. They are open to everyone free of charge or obligation. Volunteers are trained as facilitators to help guide events towards supported, safe, and meaningful conversations.

The series of conversations is hosted across the city in cafés and community spaces that have agreed to host Wellington Conversations events for free. There is no cost to attend and there is no obligation to purchase anything at any venue.

### **Who's running Wellington Conversations? How long does it go for?**

Wellington Conversations is a six-month pilot project being delivered by Reframe Aotearoa with support of Wellington City Council. The project is built on partnerships between local businesses and groups, volunteers, and community

organisations. The project starts in September 2019, focusing initially on the central city with monthly events held at different locations across Wellington City.

### **Can I bring Wellington Conversations to my neighbourhood? What's the future of Wellington Conversations?**

These are big questions – and the answer really depends on how the first six months of the project go. We'd love to see conversations happening in every neighbourhood across the city – bringing people who live near each other together for a meaningful conversation.

The scope of the project during these first six months is to support eight to ten locations across the inner city and surrounding suburbs. We're doing our best to make the whole project as open to growth as possible – while working within the limits of our time, energy and budget for supporting new locations and growth.

To make growth sustainable during the pilot project, if people want to start up and host conversations in their neighbourhoods, we're encouraging them to be self-sufficient. This means organising times, venues, and teams themselves, and publicising the events locally. We're available to give advice and informal support for new locations if they need.

### **Does someone have a question that you don't know how to answer?**

If you don't know the answer to someone's questions, you can share the website and the email of the project team with them. Quite a few of their answers may have been answered in the 'FAQs' section on the 'About' page.

Website: [www.wellingtonconversations.nz](http://www.wellingtonconversations.nz)

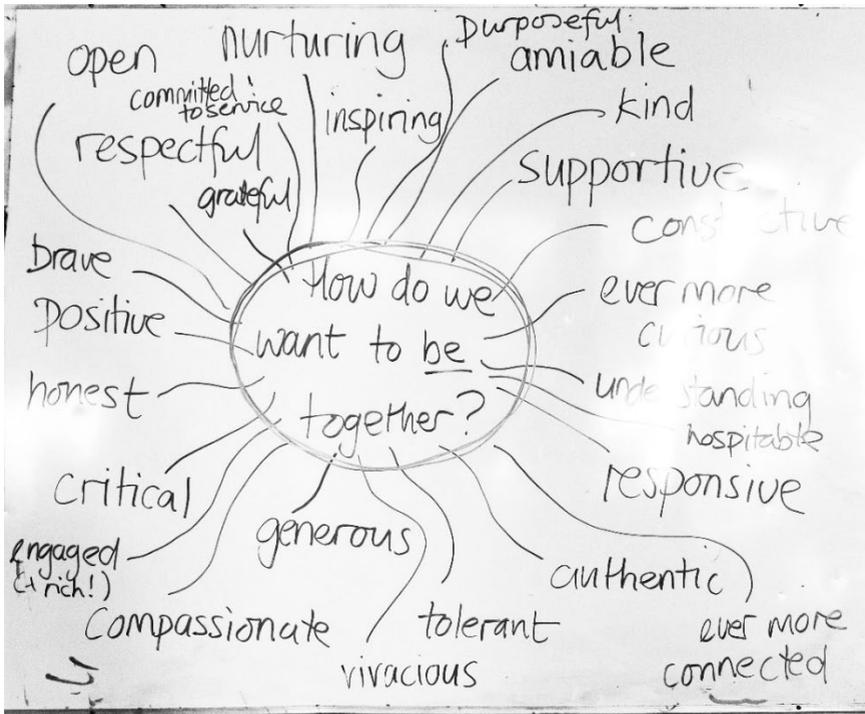
Email address: [connect@wellingtonconversations.nz](mailto:connect@wellingtonconversations.nz)

If they have a concern, complaint or some feedback, you can put them in touch with the team by email. The final section in this booklet, 'Staff contact details', has the contact details of the project staff members.

## Community agreement

As conversation facilitators, you are part of a community of people who are supporting meaningful conversations in neighbourhoods across Wellington. What does it mean to be a member of this community?

At the first facilitator hui in Sept 2019, conversation facilitators co-created an agreement for how they want to be together – see the below image.



## What's expected of conversation facilitators

### Joining, contributing and showing up

To **join**, people will generally attend a training session and learn about how the project works, and about what it means to be a conversation facilitator: joining a team, supporting and running great conversation events, and contributing to the collective learning around the project.

Conversation facilitators are expected to **take ownership of their experience** of Wellington Conversations – to make decisions themselves about their engagement and commitment. This goes from building teams, to practicing and learning the tools of the project, to running their own reflective practice, to stewarding events.

Our expectation of our conversation facilitators is simple: we expect them to **show up authentically** for the people and communities of Wellington. Showing up is about bringing your full self when you're contributing. It relates to many of the words in the community agreement – purposeful, authentic, responsive, generous.

### **Choosing to change your involvement**

At any time, conversation facilitators can **change their level of involvement in the project**. For example, someone might realise they have over-committed, and they may want to stop being involved completely. They might need to shift between teams if their availability changes. You know best what works for you.

If someone joins the community but doesn't start to get involved after joining the community (for example, they don't join a team, attend any events, etc), we'll check in with them. If they've joined a team, the team will check in on them too.

### **What isn't welcome in the community of conversation facilitators**

It's important for us also be clear on what isn't welcome in this community. For example, specific behaviours or actions that aren't aligned with the spirit and kaupapa of Wellington Conversations. This could include:

- Discrimination – including racism, sexism, homophobia or transphobia
- Harassment and non-consensual physical contact
- Behaviours or words that make people feel unwelcome or unsafe

Often things might not be this clear – for example, you might not feel good about a conversation, something that was said, or an experience you had – or, you might be worried about something that happened to someone else. We encourage you to talk to your team about it, and to the Wellington Conversations team.

### **The team is here to support you and the community**

If you or someone else has experienced anything you feel concerned about or want to talk about, we encourage you to talk to the Wellington Conversations team about it. They will listen to you – believe what you say – respect your privacy – and support you to decide what an appropriate way forward looks like.

## Tools for running a conversation

In this section, we've shared a few of the basic tools you might use for running a conversation event. These include the **process checklist** and some **ways of opening and closing** events.

### Process checklist

This checklist is a **summary** of the key elements of the conversation. This is a reminder of the structure – it supplements the script. If you're wondering how to best explain something, [refer to the script](#) (it's available on the Google Drive online). The community is constantly improving it and the language it uses.

Details	Start time
<b>Arrive and set up (at least 30 mins before)</b>	<b>-0h30</b>
Check in with your co-facilitators and the location staff member Set up the space	
<b>Welcome (from 15 mins before)</b>	<b>-0h15</b>
Sign in (first name and email) and name tag Survey (if first time)	
<b>Opening - 1 - Landing (5 mins) - Start within 5 mins of start time</b>	<b>0h00</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Co-facilitators introduce themselves</li> <li>• Karakia OR reflective silence OR something authentic to you</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and safety briefing</li> <li>• Photo consent</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet person sitting next to you</li> <li>• Introduce tool: Hands up, Volume down</li> </ul>	
<b>Opening - 2 - Share info, Process + Structure (8 mins)</b>	<b>0h10</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Wellington Conversations?</li> <li>• Share the topic</li> </ul>	
Explain the structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three questions - 15-20mins each</li> <li>• Small groups - Move to new table after each question</li> </ul>	
Privacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recording or capturing of individual conversations</li> <li>• Share reflections at the end on post-it notes</li> <li>• Take a photo and share on social media and the website</li> </ul>	
How we are with each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We arrived with our days</li> <li>• Leave feeling stronger and better</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be mindful of your needs and the needs of others</li> </ul>	
Phones – be mindful of how they can change the conversation – keep it on if you need to – consider turning it off if you don't	
<b>Opening – 4 – Table host (2 mins)</b>	<b>0h18</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One table host from each table</li> <li>• They have one job: welcome others when they sit at the table</li> <li>• You don't need to shift</li> </ul>	
<b>Questions (20 mins each – so 60 mins total)</b>	<b>0h20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift tables</li> <li>• Introduce question</li> <li>• Explain question</li> <li>• Share time for question</li> </ul>	
<b>Question two and three – as above</b>	
<b>Harvest (8 mins)</b>	<b>1h20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share a reflection on the quality of the conversations</li> <li>• Explain post-it note sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Time to reflect - write down as many post-it reflections as you like</li> <li>○ Share within your group</li> <li>○ Group shares one or two reflections with room</li> <li>○ Everyone invited to stick post-its on the wall as leaving</li> <li>○ Facilitators take photo and share on social media</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Close (2 mins)</b>	<b>1h28</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank the room</li> <li>• Next date for the location: check the website</li> <li>• Reminder about survey, feedback and topic suggestions</li> <li>• Close as you opened (Karakia, silence, something else)</li> </ul>	
<b>Pack up and check out</b>	<b>1h30</b>

## Run times

The event should take about **90 mins** from start (Opening) to finish (Close), plus 30 mins for set up and pack up. So, you'll need a space for 2 ½ hours. For example:

- 5pm – arrive 30 mins early and set up
- 5:15pm – people start arriving and are welcomed
- 5:30 to 7pm – event runs for 90 mins
- 7pm to 7:30pm – finish, pack up, and leave venue by 7:30pm

Depending on the venue, you may be able to stick around afterwards to debrief with your team. If it's a café that is closing, you'll need to find another venue - or debrief another day. If it's a community space, you'll have more flexibility.

## Ways of opening and closing

It's up to you and your team to decide how you open and close the conversations you host. Whatever you choose to do, make sure:

- It feels comfortable and authentic to you – and you decide on it together as a team
- You explain why you're doing it and what it means – you bring people along with you for the experience – and you clearly say it is optional

### Moments of reflective silence

One way of opening is to invite people to sit for a moment in **silence** and reflect on their day – a moment to arrive at the meeting. This can be a form of simple mindfulness – bringing attention to the state that we arrive in, and what we as individuals hope for from the event.

### Karakia or whakatauki

Another way of opening is with a **karakia** or a **whakatauki**. Reciting a karakia can also offer a moment for preparing and stepping into a new space or way of being together. Some karakia may be religious or have specific uses or meanings - so if you are choosing a karakia, make sure that you are comfortable and aligned with its meaning. The two karakia we've shared here are not religious.

If you are going to recite karakia at your events, here are a few things to consider:

- Make sure you feel confident saying them! Practice it – if you know someone who speaks some te reo Māori, ask them for feedback on your pronunciation and rhythm
- To make sure people feel included, it's a good idea to explain the meaning of the karakia and also to print out copies of it for people to see and to read along with you if they would like to
- There are different karakia for opening and for closing. Make sure you use an opening karakia for opening – and a closing karakia for closing. Check with someone if you're not sure!

### Something else that feels authentic to you

You are very welcome to use other practices for opening and closing a space. For example, people have run practices include mindfulness practices, moments to be thankful or grateful, etc.

## Karakia for opening and for closing

There are different karakia for opening and closing a space. We've included one of each here – these are the karakia we shared with you in the training.

The first karakia, 'Whakataka te hau', is for **opening a meeting** – you say it at the start of a meeting. It is an ancient karakia and is well known.

<p><b>Whakataka te hau</b></p> <p>Whakataka te hau ki te uru Whakataka te hau ki te tonga Kia makinakina ki uta Kia mātaratara ki tai Kia hī ake ana te atākura He tio, he huka, he houhu Tihei – mauri ora</p>	<p><b>Translation:</b></p> <p>Get ready for the westerly and be prepared for the southerly. It will be icy cold inland, and icy cold on the shore. May the dawn rise red-tipped on ice, on snow, on frost. Join! Gather! Intertwine!</p>
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The second karakia, 'He hiki tapu', is for **closing a meeting** – you say it at the end. This is a newer karakia.

<p><b>He hiki tapu</b></p> <p>Ka tū te toki He toki ka hinga He toki ka whati He toki ka motu Te taura tapu e herea nei tātou Ki tēnei minenga Ki tēnei huinga Kia tuku Kia puta Kia watea Ka tau hā, whakatau hā Tihei – mauri ora</p>	<p><b>Note:</b> We don't have a direct translation of this karakia. The paragraph below explains some of its meaning.</p> <p>Together, we cut the sacred 'rope' (the structure) that has bound us together during the meeting. We let it drop – we are released, we leave free and unencumbered. We are intentional and deliberate in finishing, and we stand clearly in relation to each other.</p>
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## Health and safety at events

If something happens at an event, it's important that you know what to do – who is responsible, and how to make sure that the right people know and can respond. Each of the four groups involved has different responsibilities, as set out below. These may change depending on the location and the way events are run.

**>> If you are concerned about something that happens, let the team know!**

### Conversation facilitators/Conversation teams

Conversation facilitators are responsible for:

- Making sure they know how many people are on site at a location – and knowing the emergency procedures for the location
- Organising/delivering a health and safety briefing for the location
- Report any issues around safety to the location team and to the Wellington Conversations team (see “Staff contact details”)

### The Wellington Conversations team

The project team is responsible for:

- Training conversation facilitators to run events safely
- Providing appropriate support to volunteers for any issues
- Working through any H&S issues with the location management
- Choosing venues that are safe and appropriate for the project
- Keeping a register of any risks or issues that are identified

### The location management team and/or staff

The location management team are responsible for:

- Making sure the location is safe – and fixing any issues identified
- Sharing a health and safety briefing with the volunteers – or doing the briefing if they are attending the event
- Updating them on any safety concerns or risks

### Participants

Participants at the events are responsible for:

- Signing in when they arrive
- Reporting any issues or risks they identify to the volunteers
- Their own behaviour and the behaviour of people they are responsible for – acting appropriately and safely while attending the event.

## Staff contact details

For non-urgent issues, the best way to contact the Wellington Conversations team is by emailing the general email address:

[connect@wellingtonconversations.nz](mailto:connect@wellingtonconversations.nz)

If there's something more urgent – for example, an incident happens at an event – please let us know as soon as possible. You can also contact the staff directly if you have a specific question for one of us.

Caroline Taylor – Project facilitator  
[caroline@reframe.nz](mailto:caroline@reframe.nz) | 027 587 2227

Tim Foote – Project coordinator  
[tim@reframe.nz](mailto:tim@reframe.nz) | 020 407 52468

## Responding to complaints and feedback

During your involvement with Wellington Conversations, someone might tell you that they weren't satisfied with something about an event or the project. They might also tell you some other kind of feedback, whether positive or negative.

Responding to feedback or complaints is always complicated. We invite you to value feedback, including complaints, as opportunities for learning and growth. Listen with an open, curious and learning mind. Be attentive to what someone means, rather than what they are specifically saying.

If someone would like to make a **complaint** to the project team, please share the general project email address with them. Let them know that this will reach the project team (including the coordinator) and that they will respond to their email as soon as possible.

Anyone can also submit **feedback** on the Wellington Conversations website:  
[www.wellingtonconversations.nz](http://www.wellingtonconversations.nz)