

DOING GREAT THINGS TOGETHER BETTER

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY IN OUR COMMUNITY

A NEIGHBOURHOOD-LED DEVELOPMENT  
RESOURCE BY RANDWICK PARK

# CONTENTS

HI THERE

WHAT IS APPRECIATIVE  
INQUIRY (AI)?

THE 5 D'S

WHY WE LOVE APPRECIATIVE  
INQUIRY (AI)?

HERE'S HOW WE USED AI...  
OUR CASE STUDIES

SECTION 2 - DO IT YOURSELF

- 1) DEFINE
- 2) DISCOVER
- 3) DREAM
- 4) DESIGN
- 5) DELIVER

QUESTIONING AND LISTENING

DETAILS





# HI THERE!

**THIS IS A RESOURCE FOR ANY PERSON OR GROUP WHO WANTS TO MAKE PROJECTS HAPPEN IN THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL OR INTEREST-BASED COMMUNITY, FOR THAT COMMUNITY, AND BY THAT COMMUNITY.**

Here in Randwick Park, South Auckland we love Appreciative Inquiry (AI) because it supports our way of working as a community – focusing on the strengths and assets of the people who live here to grow what works, and create the change we want to see.

We are not experts in AI (just yet), but we are building our community understanding and use of AI in our work to help more people in Randwick Park discover, dream, design and deliver their own projects.

So, we decided to learn from doing – we set out to carry out 3 community projects using AI, documenting what we did, how we did it and what we learnt. The results of each were quite different, but created some great learnings about how to get the best out of AI and the impacts it can achieve for personal, organisational and community development. They are provided here for you.

There isn't very much information out there about how to do AI in a community setting, so we decided to create this booklet to share our AI learnings and practice - how to use it, get the most out of it, and create projects of lasting, positive change.

# WHAT IS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY?



APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY IS A WAY OF THINKING AND WORKING WITH OTHERS THAT REFRAMES QUESTIONS FROM “WHAT’S WRONG?” TO “WHAT’S RIGHT?” AND THEN ASKS HOW CAN WE DO MORE OF WHAT’S WORKING WELL.



**AP-PRE'CI-ATE**, V. 1. VALUING; THE ACT OF RECOGNIZING THE BEST IN PEOPLE OR THE WORLD AROUND US; AFFIRMING PAST AND PRESENT STRENGTHS, SUCCESSES, AND POTENTIALS; TO PERCEIVE THOSE THINGS THAT GIVE LIFE (HEALTH, VITALITY, EXCELLENCE) TO LIVING SYSTEMS

**IN-QUIRE**, V., 1. THE ACT OF EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY. 2. TO ASK QUESTIONS; TO BE OPEN TO SEEING NEW POTENTIALS AND POSSIBILITIES.

# THE 5 'D'S

**There are 5 steps that help the conversation along, and build energy and commitment towards achieving the change people want.**

## **1. DEFINE – WHAT IS THE TOPIC OF INQUIRY?**

It is important to define the overall focus of the inquiry (the good stuff you want more of). Definition is used to clarify the area of work to be considered. It defines the project's purpose, content, and what needs to be achieved. In this phase, the guiding question is, "What generative topic do we want to focus on together?"

## **2. DISCOVER – APPRECIATING THE BEST OF 'WHAT IS'**

Discovery is based on a dialogue, as a way of finding 'what works'. It rediscovers and remembers the organization or community's successes, strengths and periods of excellence.

## **3. DREAM – IMAGINING 'WHAT COULD BE'**

Imagining uses past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future. It allows people to identify their dreams for a community or organization; having discovered 'what is best'. They have the chance to project it into their wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future.

## **4. DESIGN – DETERMINING 'WHAT SHOULD BE'**

Design brings together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from dream. We call it bringing the 'best of what is' together with 'what might be', to create 'what should be – the actions, project or programme that is best'.

## **5. DELIVER – CREATING 'WHAT WILL BE'**

The fifth stage in the 5D process identifies how the design is delivered, and how it's embedded into groups, communities and organizations.

# Why we love Appreciative Inquiry

## THE HISTORY OF AI FOR US



<http://andyjackson.com/2016/01/02/appreciative-inquiry-vs-problem-solving/>

Back in (2014) some of us in our community were introduced to Appreciative Inquiry. At the time we were grappling with some big issues and needed to organise ourselves to find solutions. We learned how AI could be used to define an organisational mission and vision for our Randwick Park Resident's Association (RPRA). From there, our appreciative approach has shaped several community initiatives, including the redevelopment of a neglected Reserve into an amazing skate park, sports fields, hard courts and community facility (Manu Tukutuku).

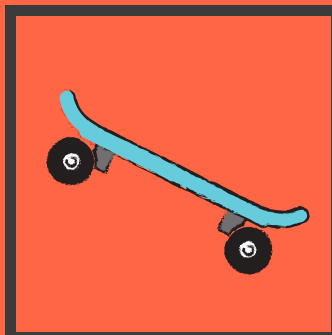
# OUR AI CASE STUDIES

PUTTING IT INTO  
PRACTICE



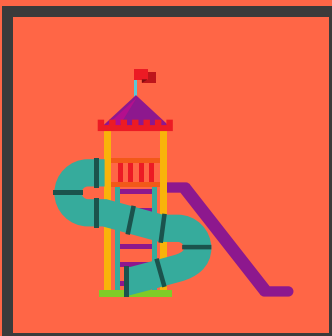
## FOODIES

The Randwick “Foodies” started from a conversation between our programme coordinator at Manu Tukutuku and a local unemployed mum who wanted to learn to bake muffins for her granddaughters birthday. She saw an opportunity at Manu’s kitchen, and knew others who wanted to learn. The group were asked “What is the kitchen dream?”, as part of their fortnightly cooking lessons, and they ended up with food safety, budgeting and hospitality training, catering events, and inspiration to get diplomas and set up their own enterprises.



## SKATE FUTURES

Since the redevelopment of the skate park in 2012, a new generation of users have grown into this space and many have wanted to make it work even better. Lots of ideas have been buzzing, and we worked with the youth to discover what they loved about the park. The project’s facilitator, however, had too many commitments and couldn’t complete the dream, design and deliver stages. We will revive this project in the future, but we learnt a good lesson - that we needed to build our youth’s understanding and capacity to do AI so that they could drive the conversation themselves.

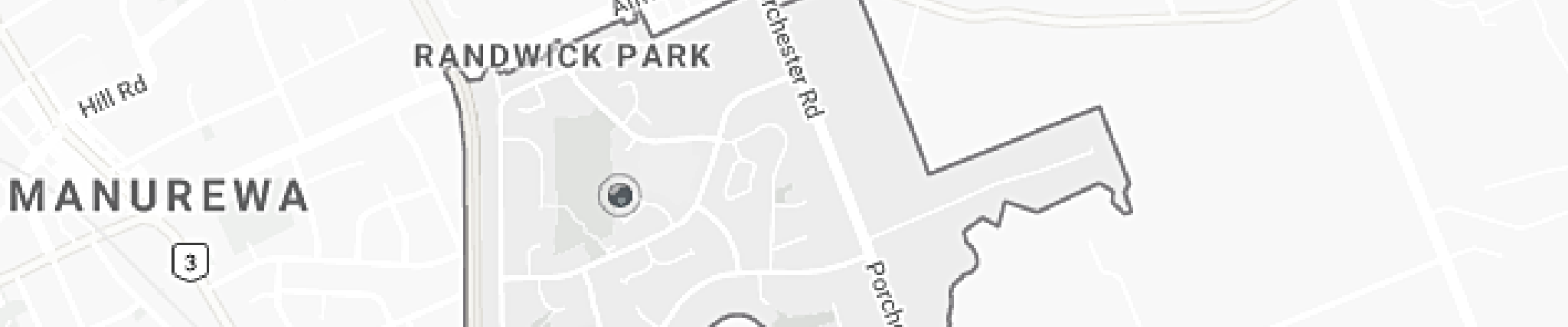


## KIDS CAN DREAM

“Kids Dreaming” started from adults wondering what being community of the year meant to our kids, and the local primary school wanting to get kids involved in thinking about health. We started with this conversation:

- What makes Randwick a great place to live?
- What has changed over the years?
- How can we get more of the good stuff?
- What do you wish for?

The kids, supported by Auckland Council and Manurewa Local Board, are now developing their own playground.



## WHAT ARE YOU AIMING FOR? WHY DEFINE?



The first phase of Appreciative Inquiry is about deciding the type of 'affirmative' topics that will form the basis of the inquiry. It identifies the issue(s) of interest, people's passions, or a need that is broadly shared, and provides a starting point or shared agenda for individuals to come together to Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver their solution.

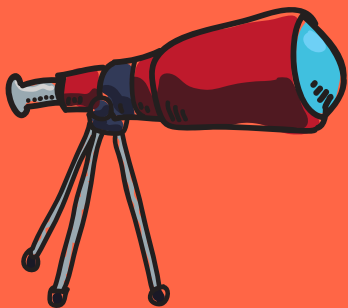
The DEFINE step could occur quite organically from a conversation, or intentionally from a desire to do 'something'. It can start broad or specific, as long as all topics of mutual interest can be raised.

- A family may be wanting to budget their household expenses better
- Members of a community might have noticed that their kids were bored during the summer holidays or after school.
- A group or organisation may have completed a recent project or programme and want to know if it has made an impact, and how they can improve it or do more.
- A school had recently surveyed parents and children and identified some shared themes they could address.
- An NGO, service provider or local authority want to roll out a new programme or service in a local area, and want to engage the community to make it fit for their purpose.





# DISCOVER



## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENS WHY DISCOVER?

Knowing the positive topic(s) there is interest about, DISCOVERY builds on the DEFINE conversation and brings people together to talk about what is working that can be built upon - the experiences, assets, skills and strengths the group or community has as individuals and as a collective. This is about asking the right questions that prompt everyone to share stories, examples and metaphors about people's most memorable experiences and accomplishments to do with the topic of inquiry - what people value about themselves and those around them, and what they'd like to see more of. The stories, memories and experiences that emerge are the gold that stir imaginations and generate excitement about what can be accomplished in the future. This way we build on what is already working.

Memories connect to our emotions. People remember how the good stuff made them feel. Appreciating what has worked well, and the skills, strengths, assets and resources around us that made good stuff happen ignites people's confidence to grow more of that good stuff. It helps people discover each other and the things around them. People are then sharing, connecting, talking and becoming more aware and appreciative of each other. This builds a relationship for working together.



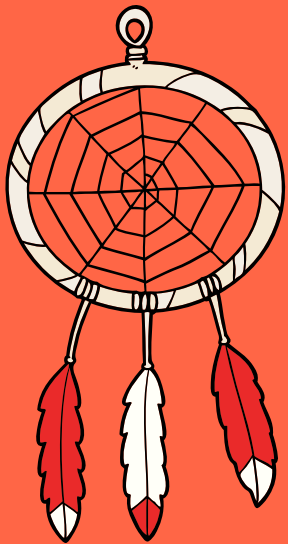
## CATCH THE DREAMS OF ALL WHY DREAM?

Based on the appreciation of the good stuff you have discovered, the Dream phase is about looking into the future and defining what success looks like for your topic of inquiry. This phase is about challenging the status quo, building upon or expanding potential. The conversation creates possibilities and stimulates the desire for change through imagination.

The group are invited to envision, unconstrained, what the desired future might look like, be like, sound like, and feel like. This “dreaming” is grounded in the reality of the past and present – it builds on the stories, strengths and successes that have already been discovered. People are doing several things.

- They are building on the organic ‘stuff’ they know works.
- They are then more confident about utilising and building this stuff into the future.
- They see how the good stuff might be expressed in a picture of success.

People may be dreaming but, because they are following examples of success, they have a belief they can deliver more of it, because they have started from within. The dream is organic, rather than something tacked on. People have a tendency to move toward the shared, positive images of the future. So it becomes more about everyone and the common dream they can all aspire to and buy into. Together, the group, organization or community creates a positive image of its most desired and preferred future.



# DREAM



## PLAN THE MASTERPIECE TOGETHER WHY DESIGN?

With a common vision, goal or ideal future in mind, the DELIVER phase is about building on the commitment and excitement to act on it, and think through what is needed to bring it into life. As a result of the previous phases, we already know about what is working, what it looks like, feels like and what resources, strengths and assets exist. The aim is to identify the small and even bolder steps - the projects, initiatives and actions - that are going to move us from our current state toward the desired future. The Design is the 'How' - the people and skills, time, money, resources and tools, activities, relationships and conversations - needed for achieving the goal.

# DESIGN





## COMBINE RESOURCES TO MAKE IT HAPPEN WHY DELIVER?

The DELIVERY phase puts the design into action. People throw themselves into the work and get some early wins. Many times, the energy of the previous steps in the design process carries that natural momentum, and people start acting to make this design a reality. Creativity has been tapped and is unstoppable. The key part of this process is that people are committed and take accountability often in new ways.

Delivery is as much about implementing a plan, as it is about reviewing and evaluating its implementation. Affirmative, inquiring questions are used to review progress, but also to identify and celebrate the good stuff that is happening. We are continuing to DISCOVER what is working well and how it can be improved, providing new stories and information that affirms an appreciative and positive focus on change, whether in our personal lives, work in the community, businesses and organisations. DELIVERY creates a sense of achievement, which often fuels new AI creations. Seeing the desired changes come into effect often leads individuals to 'live' the principles of AI - looking at the world with a strengths and asset-based lens; asking appreciative, inquiring questions; seeing connections and assets around you; and believing that we all have experienced what success looks like, and we have the capacity to create the world we want.



# DELIVER



# QUESTIONING

Human systems grow toward what they persistently ask questions about.

David Cooperrider and  
Diana Whitney

Ask positive, open questions.  
"What was it like when things were great?"  
"How do we get more of that?"

# LISTENING

You can ask why all you want, but it doesn't mean a damn thing if you're not listening to the answers.

Unknown

Keep your own thoughts and ideas separate,  
This is the time for the group to share.  
"Tell me about your ideas."



# DETAILS

## CONTENT BY

Dr Gillian Stewart,  
Director of Co-Creationz and  
Maree Beaven,  
Founder of Bloom

## COMMUNITY USING AI

**Randwick Park**  
2017 Community of the year  
[randwickpark.co.nz](http://randwickpark.co.nz)

## CONTACTS

Maree Beaven -  
[maree@beaven.co.nz](mailto:maree@beaven.co.nz)

Dave Tims -  
[d.tims@unoh.org](mailto:d.tims@unoh.org)

To discover in more detail  
HOW we used AI please  
contact us for our next  
workshops