

The Herald asked two business people who were members of the board that organised the 1999 Apec CEO Summit in Auckland to reflect on the importance of Apec

Pania Tyson-Nathan

Māori will be at the centre of Apec 2021. It's one of the biggest changes in the 21 years since we last hosted the meeting.

We now get to speak to the issues and the opportunities. We are not being spoken about.

Rachel Taulelei is the chair of the Apec Business Advisory Council. Nanaia Mahuta will take part as the current Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We have a huge level of commitment and responsibility.

I first became curious about Apec in the run-up to the 1999 Auckland Leaders meeting.

I knew the organisation was about free trade and I understood that it wasn't necessarily working for Māori. It didn't feel as if we were getting a balanced deal.

My initial goal was to understand more about why it wasn't working for Māori. Back then the average Kiwi had little appreciation of what free trade was about. That would still be true today. We need to get them engaged in the conversation.

Once I started looking more closely at the subject, I found out how free trade has the potential to be good.

At around this time I heard Wally Stone talking about the subject at a hui for Māori business leaders.

He gave a practical example of what trade liberalisation meant for ordinary people. He talked about The Warehouse, prices and how people were now able to afford to buy shoes for children.

In the past, shoes were expensive in New Zealand. So expensive that a young mother, like I was at the time, would need to put shoes for children on lay-by ready for next season.

Thanks to trade liberalisation they were no longer a major expense. Free trade means shoes are now affordable.

June Jackson was a mentor of mine. We would talk ad nauseum about free trade and lead on to discussions about fair trade.

We would discuss the impact of people's lives, on their whanau. It was real and immediate.

Then, at the 1999 Apec CEO Summit I realised I was a 30-something woman and I realised I was sitting at the same table as industry leaders.

I came away from the summit thinking we want more engagement with the process. That's not from a Treaty perspective, although there is a case for that.

My impression is that Māori have so much

to contribute to the conversation. We can call

on a lot of expertise and experience. In the 1990s, we were looking at China.

We were looking at Asia before everyone did.

Culture underpins everything in these countries. Soft skills are important, so are relationship skills.

It's not that you can't do a deal without a relationship, of course you can.

It's that you'll get a far better quality of deal if you spend time working on the relationship.

Apec gives New Zealand greater access to markets.

At the same time Māori have very good relationships with a wide range of markets.

Māori are not new to trade. We've got commonalities with Apec partners. Some of those relationships didn't start with trade, they were cultural.

Take Rewi Alley, he spent a lot of time in China. When we were doing the free trade deal with China his name would come up.

The relationship preceded any trade deal.

We've often used our relationships in ways that leverage opportunities for non-Māori business. That's critical.

Now we are seeing more and more Māori included in trade delegations and that's great because we can bring something that no other country can bring.

It's the way we engage and interact. We are culturally strong and commercially competent.

Every nation in the world is knocking on the same doors. We turn up and immediately they know we are different.

It's all of us, not just Māori, we are proud of being Kiwis and the way we conduct ourselves on the international stage.

We don't stand up and say 'Hey, look at us'. That's not necessary. It's not our way.

After all, the kumera never has to talk about how sweet it is.

● *Pania Tyson-Nathan is CEO of NZ Maori Tourism and will be inducted into the NZ Business Hall of Fame next year. She is a member of the 2021 Apec CEO Summit Advisory Group.*



Michael Barnett

There has never been an opportunity like this since the end of World War II to change the world, with Governments and businesses working as partners to create a fairer, more productive, inclusive, sustainable, and greener world.

The agenda for Apec CEO Summit 2021 is built around themes the first of which is "The World Economy". When I look at Apec, the WTO, and other treaty organisations, I think of the well-intentioned and "safe" agendas we pursued.

Our focus was on expanding trade, market access, relationships, and defence opportunities. Action was often snail-paced. Diversity was a word with no specific focus or programmes to deliver meaning.

Times have changed. Covid was the catalyst. All organisations will need to transform to make change happen urgently for the better of all.

On the cusp of Apec 2021, I look at how far – and fast – the world has pivoted, driven to lightning speed responses and solutions from fast take up of digitisation by businesses to keep economies and commerce ticking to finding vaccines to save lives and get us out of lockdown. We need to keep that pace up.

The second summit theme is "Digital Disruption". Sharing innovations, ideas and solutions is replacing protectionism, isolationism, and elitism at every level, made possible by disruptive digital technologies that touch every part of our daily lives.

Sadly, there is a disconnect. At least half the population has no internet, devices, or

education to participate in the digital world.

Digital citizenship and equal access to digital technology is a human right, and it requires commitment – from all of us – to develop a new social contract to make it happen.

None of us should sit through another summit where we all nod in agreement.

We must make it happen – now – so everyone has equal opportunity to access the online world, grow skills to become socially mobile, have access to capital and participate in the economy.

The pandemic exposed the ill-preparedness of our current economic and values systems and highlighted what marketers have told us for ages: trust counts. This is the third summit theme; "The Primacy of Trust". Consumers choose businesses and brands that are ethical, transparent and authentic, with a clear purpose beyond profit, and want proof they are who

they say they are not just in word but in deeds.

This consumer power and influence will cut a swathe across Apec as we learn to behave differently and design and deliver products, experiences and promises that are good for people and the planet.

As a region constituted of individual nations, we are quite capable of responding quickly, like agile brands and start-ups that have emerged to thrive as the world emerges with new values, priorities, preferences, and behaviours to live with the virus as it mutates.

The bete noire for me as a business leader arises from the fourth theme, "The future of Energy". Apec needs to face up to its perpetuation of fossil fuels while talking big on meeting impending carbon emission targets. It is simply not credible.

Prevarication has been the default. It cannot prevail if we are to continue to be an economic powerhouse setting the pace for the rest of the world when there are so many exciting alternatives to consider.

As energy demands increase, there are opportunities for governments and business to work collaboratively to achieve those decarbonisation targets and go green. Neither can do it alone. We will do it better together.

My hope is that there will be some straight talking and commitment to action, cooperation and innovation to harness the options to cut emissions for the good of all.

On our big list of less talk more action, is safeguarding resources and food production to leave a carbon neutral environment for future generations which covers the final summit theme, "The Sustainability Imperative".

The goals for a green recovery are to be environmentally sustainable, inclusive, innovation friendly and have credence for consumers.

That is aspirational and the vision is shared by public and private sectors.

● *Michael Barnett is CEO of the Auckland Business Chamber and a member of the Apec Business Leaders Group.*

How I will judge Apec's success

Covid's disruption is a circuit-breaker. I want business and bureaucracy coming together as partners, committed to urgent action on the priorities that really matter to lives, livelihoods, and the planet so every individual can participate and reach their potential.



How I will judge Apec's success:

"We have an opportunity to show we have a strong working partnership with government. We can show the world that the face of Aotearoa includes indigenous faces. There's an opportunity for Māori to connect with other First Nations on another, important international platform."