

Planning for change - because it will happen

As shown in the photograph below horses dominated American society in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In fact, it is estimated that by 1870 every family in the United States was directly or indirectly dependent on the horse. Cities and industries relied on horses – in 1900 in New York 6,000 horses hauled New York trolleys generating massive employment.



New York circa 1900

However, in 1903 Henry Ford founded the Ford Motor Company. Just a decade later, in 1913, Ford flipped the switch on the first assembly line, cutting the time it took to build a car from 12 hours to 2 ½ hours. That year, the number of cars produced in the United States mushroomed to 3.6 million and in 1917 the horse-pulled trolley took its last trip. By the early 1920s horses had disappeared from city streets.

The resulting decline in the horse population cut demand for horse feed and contributed to an agricultural depression in the 1920s, but there were upsides. New York's 120,000 horses had been depositing a pungent 60,000 gallons of urine and 2.5 million pounds of manure every day on the city's streets. New industries were also spawned, not least the transformation of advertising. Seen by passengers traveling in a car at a speed of 30 miles per hour or more a sign had to be grasped instantly, or it wouldn't be grasped at all, giving

birth to the creation of corporate logos that could be recognized immediately wherever they appeared.



New York circa 1920

When he was asked about the decision to launch the Ford Motor Company, Henry Ford famously commented “If I’d asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses”.

So how is this relevant for not-for-profits in Taranaki in 2025? It reminds us that no matter how stable our sector or our organisation may feel, change might be just around the corner. We may not be able to control that so we should always be looking forward and planning how we might adjust. Waiting to react to change led by others is not always the best strategy, sometimes it is better to be bold and lead the change ourselves. It also re-emphasises that change will be unsettling but may not always be a bad thing. Change can create new opportunities that would not occur if we stayed the same.