How can we understand where each other is coming from, and ensure that evidence is more effectively used to bring about positive action?

A visual summary of discussions in four interactive sessions at Superu's Evidence to Action conference, June 2017.
Ideas from 151 people were captured as shown; ovals reflect recurring issues.

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CHALLENGES

THE ENVIRONMENT
- it's complex – there are no quick fixes
- a high level of scrutiny
- evidence can be inconvenient

TIMELINESS & TIMEFRAMES
- evidence and evaluation can/should/does take time – but we have on-the-ground situations to respond to now
- reflection vs being "fleet of foot"
- short-term politics vs long term need
- media/political expectations vs research timeframes

How to reconcile these timeframes

WE NEED TIME
- to think, collaborate, engage and reflect
- we need funding to support this

FUNDING

DATA
- easy-to-use data sources needed
- understanding what to do with the information
- understanding the options
- a changing evidence base
- big data is negative-based
- issue of data sovereignty
- fixation on data without defining the problem

RESEARCH CHALLENGES
- research to support a foregone conclusion
- access to data
- cost of researching alternatives to Western constructs

QUALITY OF EVIDENCE
- how good is good enough?
- without evidence it's just belief or intuition
- acknowledge hierarchy of evidence and "place of voice"
- a wealth of evidence tailored to audience
- how relevant is the research/evidence and what do we want to use it for?
- where are the research gaps?

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
- systems that allow leaders to emerge
- improving leadership calibre and data literacy
- more buy-in to complex systems

TYPES OF EVIDENCE
- trust professional intuition and know when it's appropriate to use it
- international literature + research + articulation + context + response
- value of combining different evidence types for a specific context
- when evidence is not convenient or timely

POSSIBILITIES

Where are the sensemakers?

POWER OF STORIES & ANECDOTES
- they create momentum
- they are humanising
- use them to capture insights quickly and get to leadership quickly
- they persuade
- alternative to Western constructs

COLLABORATION
- co-constructing / co-designing solutions with funding to support
- engagement needs to be part of the funding package
- use examples of successful collaboration
- partner with evidence creators

IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP
- to effect system change
- to influence empowerment of staff and clients
- to build an evaluation culture, and one where research is valued
- to be OK with failure
- to support dialogue about evidence
- to commit to using evidence
- all have a responsibility to be evaluative

The solution is often with us as lived experience

COMMUNITY INPUT
- richness of community stories
- sharing skills, stories and context-specific evidence
- "nothing about us without us"
- using indigenous voices and wisdom
- recognise that not everyone wants to engage
- users give a holistic view, can broker local relationships

SECTOR SELF-BELIEF
- to be informed by clients
- to be assertive about what works for clients
- to be responsive and reflective

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT
- get better at asking better questions
- move from intuitive basis to practice

COMMUNICATION
- use multiple products
- targeting
- convey impacts
- talk to wider community/NZ society (new channels, plain English)
- talk to funders
- keep it short, balanced, with key info at the front
- disseminate systematically and share publically

APPROACHES
- empowering those in need
- support people to find their own power
- appreciative enquiry (understanding why something works)
- check effectiveness and impact – adapt to make best use of what we have now, in a timely way
- visualise collectively for/with users