

I Back Jack

for Mayor of Wellington.

Manifesto

jackyan.com
backjack2013.com

Jack Yan

You can't beat Wellington.

We love Wellington.

Good days and bad days, I believe Wellington's the place to be. I've called it my home since 1976, and I see potential in every corner. Our vibrant communities, our generosity, our independent thinking, and our energy. It's a pleasure to be part of it all and to engage with it every day as part of my business. What would be better? To take all of that to a higher stage where everyone, around the world, knows that Wellington is a world-class city with world-class people.

That's what I believe we should aim for as a city.

How do we get there? First: inclusiveness. This is a city of diverse cultures. It takes a uniter to get everyone on board. We need to be engaging all our communities, and tap into our collective potential.

I've had to unite people all my life whether as a business leader or as a mentor. With four languages under my belt, I can reach out to people all over our city, and around the world. We need to be engaging young people in Wellington so they feel they are part of their own destinies, instead of losing our brightest offshore.

You can only do that with someone who can appreciate every part of Wellington—not someone who panders only to special-interest groups.

Secondly, we get there through valuing innovation. We have a business agency that needs the support of our city to focus on the right businesses, namely those that can improve our city's economy.

I've spent 25 years in innovative businesses, and I've tried to be a pioneer. Some say I succeeded. But there are people all over Wellington who are doing this in far more diverse areas. I've been with Business Mentors here for seven years and seen it for myself. Let's recognize them and give them the help they need. Let's look at those businesses that can become global players, rather than focus on the same names that are already strong enough on their own.

Get that right, get them employing people, and we'll begin to turn Wellington around. High-value jobs that can keep our cafés and our small businesses humming along, and ensure that our office space is used effectively.

We also need to ensure that building tenders, consents and improvements can happen more swiftly when it comes to earthquake strengthening, and help those community properties that might not have the funds.

We can raise our standard of living and make us a fairer society.

Thirdly, we need to restore our civic pride. I'm passionate about Wellington, but is our council? They say they are only in election year. Most of the time they're bogged down in politics. There's a reason former mayor Sir Michael Fowler endorsed me in 2010: he reckoned I could bring people together and we would focus on the important stuff again. I'm happy to say Sir Michael, as well as Xero co-founder Hamish Edwards, are among the supporters of this campaign in 2013.

We have a central government concentrating on Auckland because of its population and Christchurch because of its recovery. So where does Wellington stand?

Wellington stands as a global city, because while we are all proud New Zealanders, we can be even prouder Wellingtonians. I see so many parts of Wellington that are better than anything in Singapore, Montréal, Portland, or Stockholm. And with my global connections, with my work regularly all over this world, I'm willing to bring us closer to the rest of the planet.

I'm prepared not only to use my connections to bring capital in to our city and to create new ventures, but show off just how fantastic and inclusive we are.

I'd love to work with you on making Wellington even more unbeatable.



Manifesto

My campaign has three overlapping themes:

- growing our economy;
- cutting waste and keeping a lid on our rates;
- uniting Wellingtonians.

Growing our economy

- Wellington as a global hub for innovation, and getting international events that can push this aspect, alongside our sporting and cultural ones.
- Working with property owners to revitalize inner-city areas for innovation, including a tech precinct.
- Work with Grow Wellington and our universities to identify and nurture our next export champions and employers.
- Encouraging the right investment into Wellington.
- Working on getting more international links into Wellington—I was the first to propose an airport runway extension as part of my mayoral campaign, back in April.
- Promote Wellington firms globally and making sure we have a dialogue to the C40, the 40 largest and most dynamic cities in the world. As the only candidate who has dealt regularly at the top level in international business, I can help connect our best firms.
- Growing our technological infrastructure in an economically viable and sensible way.
- Working cooperatively with regional mayors, Grow Wellington, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

Cutting waste and keeping a lid on rates

- Greater transparency in council, including publishing our expenses.
- Supporting prudent management of WCC finances.
- Being tougher with cost overruns on public projects.
- End of favouritism for certain parties in business, and the introduction of a more meritorious approach toward real innovators and job creators.
- Using technologies to allow citizens to communicate more readily with council services, and to search easily for public documents without burdensome official information requests.
- Acknowledging that Wellington already has the engineering prowess when it comes to earthquake engineering solutions and leading the dialogue on this.
- Retaining our assets.
- Plain-English reporting at all levels, internally and externally—let's cut the time-wasting jargon.
- Driving down debt and investing in arts, infrastructure and housing, especially as the population ages.

Uniting Wellingtonians

- One or two market weekends in the inner city each summer—just like during the movie premières, with no cars—to allow Wellingtonians to enjoy what we offer.
- Supporting youth with programmes including internships and apprenticeships to combat our high youth unemployment.
- A city-branding project that involves a true cross-section of Wellingtonians, including young people.
- Promoting Wellington through social media—and allowing Wellingtonians from all walks of life to participate in this programme.
- Using technologies to help the homeless get jobs and assistance.
- Assisting older Wellingtonians, advocating for the retention of transportation privileges.
- Reaching out to minority communities so they are no longer left out—and making sure they feel as much part of our city as those communities that have been here for longer.

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Growing our economy

It's easy for anyone seeking office to talk about growth.

Not growth for growth's sake, but for Wellington to take a larger slice of the economic pie—because we are a city that punches above our weight.

A global hub for innovation

Last time out, I said that Wellington could be a global hub for innovation, because of the innovative thinking of our people. I still believe we can be: by exporting ideas through licensing, some thing I've done through most of my career, we can create frictionless exports and high-value jobs.

By working with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Grow Wellington, and our property owners, we can revitalize parts of our city to create an innovation hub, one that will prepare us for the 2010s and 2020s—before other New Zealand centres do the same thing.

Even as manufacturers—remember there are 13,000 people employed in that sector—we have advantages. If only we had the right connections and the right leadership to encourage that. Someone who knows first-hand what is needed—and even what danger signs appear for our businesses.

We need to avoid a “race to the bottom” with low-wage jobs where Wellingtonians could see their roles easily taken over by cheap, third-world nations.

Imagine how thrilled I was when the late Sir Paul Callaghan gave his speech in 2011 at the Wellington Town Hall, where so many of my own thoughts were confirmed by someone who had done some rigorous academic research on the area.

Twenty thirteen has made me even more determined about this direction.

When it comes to events, Wellington can stay on-message. Already home to a TED talk in Te Aro, Wellington can go further and be the home of more events, including one celebrating design and creativity, enhancing our city's message more. It'll show Wellington to be well rounded alongside our sporting events, and, given the nature of the creative industry, encourage other international, world-class events.

Identifying our next export champions and high-growth firms, and supporting them

With the other mayors in our region, I can work with Grow Wellington to place its focus on not only innovation, but have them use a set of criteria to identify our next export champions. Which firms in Wellington are \$1 million outfits that can be \$10 million ones with the right nudge, and the right endorsement from our city?

My global connections have seen me work on four continents, including India and China in our own back yard. Let's bring the right investment in to Wellington—who better than someone who knows these cultures, and can speak numerous languages? There is a demand for the sort of innovations our city generates—just look at Singapore, which is hungry for the next big thing. Why shouldn't it come from here?

International links to Wellington

That also means working on getting international links to Wellington Airport—and work with the parties who are most worried about that, namely our own airlines. We can help ensure that they won't be disadvantaged by these connections. The Airport runway should be extended, especially to handle fully loaded jets, and to do that, Wellington needs to put forth a compelling case that it's clear on where business is heading.

Connecting our business leaders internationally

During 2010, I worked with Vattenfall, the Swedish power company, to bring in an electric car programme to Wellington. I can work with these leaders and connect them to Wellington companies involved in related areas—and generate even more innovation, in an environmentally conscious way. And what of great Wellington companies who deserve an airing overseas? You have an advocate in me, because I've spent years promoting my own firm and others already, including my seven years with Business Mentors here. I'll be encouraging Kiwi companies to grow and take a bigger share globally, supporting majority ownership of companies by New Zealanders.

A tech precinct

We can redevelop the area around upper Cuba Street, right down to Cambridge Terrace, as a high-tech precinct, that will encourage greater collaboration among firms in that sector, attract exciting start-ups (many of whom are already on Cuba Street), and foreign direct investment. Wellington can be New Zealand's most high-tech city—and if we don't do it, we can be overtaken by Christchurch when their rebuilding is completed. The time to do it is now.

Connected to this is encouraging some of the former crown research institutes back into the city. Wellington is a smart place—and we can be a hub for this country's intellectual capital. It's also why I am in favour of an inner-city park, acknowledging that modern development requires a proper work-life balance. There are going to be new sites as some buildings will not be worth upgrading, and we can consider those—in line with a stronger vision for our city.

Critical mass for research and development

Not enough work has been done to foster a fruitful relationship with Victoria University and other tertiary institutions in our city. Yet the engineering and computing department is growing rapidly—and we can tap in to the talent there, to show our next bright sparks that Wellington wants their innovative thinking to remain home. Cooperation with Vic, Massey, Weltec, Whitireia and others is very important to make sure we have the talent—and I already have strong connections with the majority of these institutions through years of working directly with them. We can build on this to target critical mass for our R&D in Wellington.

Collaboration

Collaboration is great among our own communities—but even better when we have a global perspective. This is one of many programmes I want to see develop, so we can create world-class products and services.

I can work with property owners to fill up our empty spaces. Pop-up stores and galleries are one idea, collaborative spaces for businesses are another. If it means allowing some retailers to get to a decent turnover, they can move on to better premises.

Many who come to Wellington fall in love with our city because we are generous and smart. The best thing we can show off is our inclusiveness and our creativity. Wellingtonians work together: it's in our nature. I can work with the Council and sponsors to create more spaces for collaboration, where Wellingtonians can get inspired by one another.

Our technological infrastructure

We should continue to grow our technological infrastructure—we can get a lot of bang for the buck when it comes to wifi and connectivity, connecting our libraries and schools, for relatively little investment. I pushed for the free wifi programme here in Wellington in 2010, which has hit record usage, but that was only the prelude. I will make sure that, with the help of Grow Wellington, we can create firms that will become strong employers in this sector.

Getting investment for Wellington

With central government's focus on Christchurch and Auckland, who looks after Wellington? We are in danger of losing out on business and the arts. It is time to look further afield and connect Wellington to direct investment globally—and to allow those here in our city to invest in foreign firms, too. This can only be done by a leader who has spent a lifetime bridging cultures while remaining, at heart, a New Zealander.

We can't be reliant on a cap-in-hand attitude when it comes to government: we're a city that gets things done independently and innovatively, but that takes leadership and someone who understands growing businesses. The economic advantages are a no-brainer.

A regional view of Wellington

Long-term, I believe in growing Wellington as a region. We are in the centre of the country and we have to work with our neighbouring mayors. Even without being in office, I have a good relationship with the Mayor of Hutt City, Ray Wallace. Our region's business people have been informing me of their plans, and they, too, are looking at Wellington as a whole. If rates can stay the same or be cut for us, then the region needs to investigate local governance reform. My dealings at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment also show the same long-term vision. We can thrive, and we need to consider the big picture—it's not just being cool and little, it's about having a dream and realizing it.

In the city where Xero, 42 Below, Weta, Silverstripe and Trade Me started, we're used to that.

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Cutting waste and keeping a lid on rates

I'm a ratepayer, and I'm unimpressed with how much my rates have gone up by. A lot of this is due to the opacity of the city.

By not being part of the entrenched system that has seen certain elements of the council hold back our city, I don't have any baggage as other politicians might have. That means I'm gearing to get things done for all of us.

Transparency

I want to see greater transparency in our council. While my idea of webcasting council meetings wasn't popular in 2010, I still want to make sure Wellingtonians know where our money is being spent.

That means making the council more accountable, by publishing our expenses, including those of councillors, and details of all major spending.

We need to make the preferred contractors' lists transparent, along with the selection criteria, to encourage high standards in all our firms.

Putting public documents online

Connected to this is ensuring all public documents are put online. Why are citizens having to file Official Information Act requests for things they have a right to know about? Use the internet, get them online, make them searchable—and that way, we can cut costs in providing people with the information they need, while making the Wellington City Council far more accountable to the public.

Costs at council

We can effect savings within the council, through prudent management of its finances and streamlining through our software packages, including bringing in open source programs where possible.

That also means getting tougher on cost overruns with council projects. I want to see an end to the culture where it's OK to tell people that a building is going to cost \$20 million and it winds up costing tens of millions more.

A fairer deal for Wellingtonians

While some of the rates' increases are already set in stone, I'll do my best to make sure that the next plan will be fairer on Wellingtonians.

I also want to see the end of a culture which favours the same parties in our city for business—this is why those who will be promoted under my watch will be businesses that meet the criteria for job creation and become major champions for our city.

Using technology for progress

We can already use technology to send Tweets or even Instagram photos to the council when it comes to things that need repair in our city. I'll be taking this lead and getting the service better known and more widely used, especially if it helps cut costs and delays to make Wellington better.

That same technology can be used for a more efficient resource consent approval, and move us toward a paperless system.

On a related note, the Council's dog registration policy presently incentivizes good pet ownership through its responsible dog owner discount. I would like to see a similar policy adopted for cat owners too, where owners are incentivised to desex and microchip their cats. Looking wider, the registration process must be as easy as possible. I'll make sure that owners can do a good deal of this online.

Earthquake strengthening

When it comes to earthquake strengthening, that's going to be important. When I talk to property owners, some tell me that their problem isn't coming up with the money: it's the lag in the tendering processes and when construction companies can start on their projects. They're too occupied with other cities. We can't afford delays, so that will mean encouraging and facilitating smaller firms that meet high standards to work together to fix Wellington's buildings, creating rules for them to be accountable to owners. If we need international help, as much as I want to see this work remain local, then we'll consider it. It's going to be a priority to make Wellington safe.

In parallel, I'll work with councillors so we have an acceptable set of rules about when this work should begin, so we don't get the delays we're seeing today.

The funding options, after all, have already been done, so Wellington can move on. We can help those community buildings, too, under these. We have great data on earthquakes and engineering solutions, so why isn't our obvious leadership in this area made into an advantage? Wellington can lead the debate, employing smart technologies for engineering, and provide our expertise nationally and internationally—if only we had the will to do so. I'll lead the charge on this as it should not be an ongoing issue when the hard yards have already been done by council officers.

The inner-city park

The current council has already earmarked spending of over \$3 million for an inner-city park. My campaign team has already identified one site at Swan Lane—where we'll investigate options with the current owner—and there are others where leases are coming up. With so many buildings not up to code, there will be other sites. I favour this in creating a balance to the economic growth programmes in this manifesto: there's no point talking about a Cuba Street tech precinct if it isn't balanced by proper, public space. Around our city, we can spend prudently based on existing budgets, and not go overboard with any new spending that isn't going to provide Wellingtonians with a real return.

Our city's assets

I want to see Wellington hold on to our assets, including water, and, where it is economically prudent for ratepayers, we should end outsourcing to foreign companies that do not pay tax in our country. Again, if it means savings for Wellington, as well as extra revenue, parking enforcement should be brought back under city management when legally permissible—the notion of a foreign company issuing fines does not sit well with the citizens I have spoken to.

A more efficient council

The way council is run means endless meetings and mistrust with the culture it presently has. By voting in someone with no political ties to the establishment, there is no favouritism—and a culture of trust can be created. That means letting the right councillors administer the portfolios they are most passionate about, and insist on plain-English reporting at all levels so all Wellingtonians can have easy access to information about council decisions, especially online. If citizens can see transparently what their elected officials are doing, then we will watch ourselves—and we can reduce the frequency of meetings that councillors themselves have, and let them get on with their jobs instead of fighting with their own. There are good examples of open government that we can adopt and improve on.

In 2010, I said we should ensure that council organizations get to work together more. There's not sufficient dialogue between various these organizations, so it's no wonder the messaging is inconsistent. Two logical ones that should work more closely together, to get our city's brand right, are Positively Wellington Tourism and Grow Wellington. I'll work with their CEOs to create a cultural change, especially when marketing our city.

A better relationship between council and its officers

There needs to be a change of internal culture, something I have had some experience on from the consulting world. Wellington, in the 2010s, needs to be very focused and very directed toward progress, and that can only be done if citizens, council staff and the council itself are united. That needs to come from the top, and from the inside.

Prioritizing our spending

These savings, and the job growth, can help drive down this city's debt—and we can then begin to invest in things that we need, such as funding arts, infrastructure (including housing for those of us who need a leg up), and entrepreneurial programmes for Wellingtonians.

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Uniting *all* Wellingtonians

There's one thing in the Council that doesn't reflect most of our city: divisiveness. Go all around our city, and most Wellingtonians are known for generosity, tolerance, and a spirit of cooperation.

Helping the next generation

There have been relatively few programmes to help younger Wellingtonians. Probably because politicians don't see them as big voters. It shouldn't matter: mayoral policies should look to future voters because the brain drain to Auckland, Australia, and the UK is doing us little good.

Not only will I advocate internship and apprenticeship programmes such as Media Lab, which will see young people placed with our tech and creative firms with the city supporting the venture. It will be a priority for the programme to meet a high conversion rate to real jobs—something I have practised in my own firm.

Young people should rightly participate in our city's decisions, because they have more to lose if we mess things up. That means opening the city up to greater participation online and encouraging input from them in every area, from the arts to commerce, including a city branding campaign where they can have their say over Wellington's direction.

In 2010, I was the most connected candidate, and I promise to remain accessible through major social networks in this one, and after getting office.

I believe some minor crimes such as tagging stem from a sense of hopelessness, something that should not be happening in a first-world country. By giving youth a say, we can reverse their pessimism and let them know that the system is working for their futures.

New Wellingtonians

I stand for welcoming new Wellingtonians, too—making sure everyone feels included, whether they move from another city in Australasia or further afield. All should experience first-hand our generosity and collaborative nature. We need to make it easier for people who can contribute positively to our city and our economy to come here, and that means being more informative, including showing more of Wellington through apps and online services.

Promoting our city

In my last campaign, I said that I wanted to see everyone participate in promoting Wellington, even our tourists—because there's nothing like a campaign from the heart. That's what *welovewgtn* is all about: a hashtag that shows the best sides of our city. I'd like to see different Wellingtonians from all walks of life volunteer each week to talk about their world, through social media, and accounts set up just for that. Let's restore our pride and our unity—doing something like this, to a global audience, is more meaningful than a few posters about 'Neighbours' Day'.

Events

Wellington needs to get a lot of its economic fundamentals right so we can continue hosting the Sevens when that comes up for renewal. Also in the next term is the 2015 Cricket World Cup. I'll work with our city's business and tourism agencies, Grow Wellington and Tourism Wellington, to ensure that we get out a consistent message, and that we establish not only closer working relationships between the two, but synergies. These can strengthen our case for great sporting events—and other events—in our city.

Market weekends

It's not only in the digital world where I want to see this happen. In 2010, I proposed doing a market weekend for the inner city in the summer. That means no cars in the inner city, so we can visit shops and stalls and take part in cultural activities. If your feedback is positive, we might even do two. That means in the inner city, we follow what Amsterdam and Brussels do—and we already know how to manage it, because of our movie premières. Let's enjoy Wellington with friends and family, without the distraction of motor traffic.

Mid-sized music venue

We need a mid-sized music venue, too, something that I said three years ago—something three times the size of Bodega or four times the size of the San Francisco Bathhouse. What properties do we have that can be adapted or can we encourage one to be built? Having one means that we can attract more acts and people to our city, boosting our economy.

Artificial surfaces

In sports, Wellington should continue its investment into artificial surfaces. What works in Wellington is our work-life balance, and we should continue to support sporting activities. This should encourage sporting clubs and their activities—a great way of bringing people together and keeping us healthy.

Helping our most vulnerable citizens

We have a problem in Wellington with homelessness—something that was foreign to our city when I first came in 1976. I want to see WCC continue its support of shelters and other programmes, as well as adopt technologies which can help disadvantaged Wellingtonians with the simplest things, such as a telephone number where they can be reached for job interviews. A small messaging centre that qualifying Wellingtonians can use to get a leg back up into the job scene is a small price to pay to restore one's dignity. I'm going to work with experts to deliver this cost-effectively—and personalizing it sufficiently for applicants.

Even if we could have one extra advocate for the homeless who can work through the red tape on behalf of our fellow Wellingtonians who have fallen on tough times, that would be a massive start. We can assist them into the training programmes such as the Soup Hub run by the Compassion Centre.

Lending a hand to older Wellingtonians

Equally, we must assist older Wellingtonians. With the gains that I expect to make, Wellington should ensure that housing becomes a priority, especially as Kiwis live longer and our population ages. I will advocate for the retention of transportation privileges with those decision-makers. Additionally, in bringing people together, I would like to introduce an educational programme to bring older Wellingtonians into the internet age, one which we can create with the help of youth.

It's important that our older and most experienced citizens participate, too, and if they are hampered by mobility, technology can help bridge that gap. It is foolish to waste the wisdom of their years in the real world—they can participate in our city's direction if they so wish, in the public or private sector. I come from a culture where older people are revered and respected for their real-world experiences—just because you are drawing a pension does not mean your contribution becomes less valuable.

Accessibility issues

Wellington has not done well on ensuring proper accessibility to citizens with mobility issues. There are buildings that aren't meeting New Zealand standards on access. We'll collaborate with disability groups to identify them, and property owners, to make sure that this is remedied sustainably. With the earthquake strengthening that the city needs, projects like this can be done in tandem.

Giving a voice to minority communities

It is vital to me that, if we are harnessing younger and older Wellingtonians, we must also reach out to minority communities in our city and tap in to their knowledge, wisdom and energy. Whether we like to admit it or not, some communities feel left out. In the last election, I was the only candidate to know first-hand what racism feels like. This will not stand, and Wellingtonians need to know that minority communities will no longer be perceived as outsiders, but a rich, vital and mainstream part of a modern society. The knowledge that our communities have helps Wellington with our global outreach and exports.

Additionally, your name should not prevent you from getting your dream job—and we'll be ensuring a fairer deal in the Council first, and lead by example. This is about Wellington in the 21st century, giving all Wellingtonians the same rights.

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Visit my campaign website at jackyan.com.

Feedback on this manifesto is welcome.

There is a Facebook group devoted to discussion:
facebook.com/groups/backjack2013/

Additionally, there is a Facebook page for supporters:
facebook.com/jackyan.ourcentury

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