

## **Collaborating with Heart – Keeping human caring at the heart of social work**

Presenter: Richard Aston, CEO of Big Buddy

This workshop will begin with a Tedx talk Richard Aston gave in 2016 in which he challenged those in social services not to lose sight of the human caring that sits at the heart of real social work in the many contexts social service providers work in. The 15-minute video will be followed by a discussion.

Richard's challenge to social policy makers, funders and social programme designers is to hold up human caring as our guiding light - the key reference and source of our work. Everything else is secondary.

"To social programme managers my challenge is to stretch your programme structures out wide enough to allow enough space, within your programme, for human caring to flourish on its own terms

"Sure social programmes need structure and purpose including the structures of collaboration. But that structure should never dictate to point we suffocate the growth of human caring at the core of our programme – it happens!

"We should look out for where human caring is emerging in all its forms, expected or unexpected and foster it. We need to get our social programmes out of the way of real human caring and alongside it. To help it emerge and flourish as it has done for all of human history.

"The current – and worthy – meme of collaboration and cooperation poses another challenge to social agencies. Organisations have to hold their core values very close in order to prevent compromises that can dilute and undermine programmes. We risk forgetting what's really at the heart of the social work we do.

"We need to ask ourselves three important questions: Who am I? Where am I going? Who is going with me? The trick is to get them in the right order."

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*Richard bailed out of the corporate world in 2001 to take over the reins of Big Buddy. Growing an embryonic not-for-profit into a highly-respected, national organisation matching male volunteers with fatherless boys. His strongest belief is around the strength of human caring and the profound healing that comes when humans care deeply for each other without judgement or expectation.*

*Richard is also chair of Consumer NZ, a Vodafone World of Difference award winner and a passionate father, grandfather, celebrant. He co-authored the book *Our Boys – Raising strong, happy sons from boyhood to manhood* – published by Allen & Unwin, July 2016.*