

Executive Summary

Social Profile

With 8,916 people in 2001, the Wairoa District ranks 64th in size out of the 74 local authorities in New Zealand. The Wairoa District has the highest proportion of Māori population of all New Zealand local authorities, at 58.8% in 2001 (this compares with only 14.7% nationally). The estimated population of the Wairoa District as at 30 June 2003 is 8,880 people.

In the five year period of 1996 to 2001, the Wairoa District has gone through a number of dramatic demographic changes. The most significant of these is continued population decline: the district's population decreased by 1,209 people from 1996 to 2001. Projections of population change indicate this trend of a declining population as continuing.

Factors contributing to population growth and decline in the Wairoa District include births, deaths, and migration. The Wairoa District has a relatively high birth rate, with rates of births over deaths (natural increase) contributing to substantial population growth. This natural growth is significantly countered by outwards migration, to neighbouring regions like Hawke's Bay and Gisborne. There is a trend toward decline levels of births year-to-year in the Wairoa District.

Tangata Whenua

The largest iwi in the Wairoa District is Ngati Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, closely followed by Ngati Kahungunu (area not defined), Ngati Porou, Tuhoe, and Rongomaiwahine. Ngati Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa and Rongomaiwahine iwi are both based in the Wairoa District. Both of these iwi have substantial numbers outside of the local district. In total, there are 14,661 people of Ngati Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa affiliation in New Zealand, a number greater than the actual population of the Wairoa District. The total number of people of Rongomaiwahine (Te Mahia) descent nationally is 2,322.

The Wairoa District has a unique age structure. The age structure for Māori compared to Pakeha (non-Māori) is dramatically different. Māori are much younger, with fewer proportionally in older age cohorts (40+). By comparison, the largest age cohort for Pakeha is 50-54. Both Māori and Pakeha have significant age cohort "gaps" in the 15-34 age groups, when young people head away from the district for education and/or employment.

There is a clear trend in the Wairoa District towards couples forming relationships where the partnership is not legally formalised through marriage. From 1991 to 2001, the percentage in the category "partner other" rose from 8% to 17% in the Wairoa District. This reflects an overall trend nationally.

The most common language after English in the Wairoa District is Māori, spoken by 20% of all people (this compares to only 4.5% for New Zealand as a whole). For the Māori sub-population, 32% speak Te Reo Māori.

Socio-Economic

People in the Wairoa District tend to have lower incomes, less higher qualifications, and higher rates of government-based income support. However, some positive trends are emerging: for example, the proportion of people receiving income from private wages and salaries topped 50% in the 1996 to 2001 period.

People in the Wairoa District tend to have lower rates of access to telephone, the Internet, and private automobiles. There is a trend away from electricity as a heating source, perhaps as a result of rising costs. Bottled gas has risen as a heating source from 21% in 1996 to 27% in 2001.

Community Safety

In regards to community safety, the level of criminal offending in the Wairoa District over the past five years has been relatively steady with no clearly apparent trend of decline or increase. Most criminal offences are burglary and theft, with violent offending the next highest category.

Criminal offenders in the Wairoa District are disproportionately male, Māori, unemployed, and in the 14 to 39 year age group. Factors contributing to criminal offending includes drugs, alcohol, and gang affiliation. The characteristics of victims of criminal offences are more reflective of those of the general Wairoa District populace as a whole.

Road safety is an important issue in the Wairoa District. The Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) has prepared a profile which guides its planning in the Wairoa District.

Economic Profile

In 2001, the unemployment rate in the Wairoa District was 11.9%, compared with 7.5% for all of New Zealand. According to Census, a total of 73% of all workers in the Wairoa District in 2001 were paid employees. In the Wairoa District, Pakeha have a higher proportion in self-employment or as employer than Māori.

One in five employees (20%) in the Wairoa District are involved in an occupation in the agricultural and fishery sector, a much higher rate than nationally of one in twelve (8%). Similarly, looking at the category of "industry", one in four people work in the agriculture, forest and fisheries industry (compared to only 8% nationally).

Transport

Most people in Wairoa drive a personal vehicle to work every day (44%), whilst a high proportion also worked at home (10%) or walked to work (8%).

Traffic levels on district highways are increasing, particularly as a result of forestry and logging developments. The district has a level of traffic accident rates similar to the national average. The rail line through the district is in decline. There are currently plans to upgrade district roads to meet the demands of growing logging traffic.

Wairoa is growing in attraction as a tourism destination. There is a growing demand from Wairoa District Council to see the road to Lake Waikaremoana paved to increase tourism visitors to this "eco-destination" and to improve road safety.

State of the Environment

The Wairoa District is a largely rural area, with large areas of rural hill country mostly used for sheep-farming and forestry, and flat land along the coast and in river valleys. The district has a total area of about 4,118 square kilometres, including approximately 130 km of coastline. A large proportion of the district is part of Te Urewera National Park, a pristine area of native bush including Lake Waikaremoana and Lake Waikareiti. The main settlement of the district is Wairoa township, and there are growth pressures at the beach resort settlements of Mahia Peninsula.

Natural Heritage

In total, 77,386 hectares are in the Department of Conservation (DoC) stewardship in Wairoa District. Almost all of this (99%) is native forest and bushland reserves. Te Urewera National Park consists of a total land area of 212,673 hectares, of which approximately a quarter lies within Wairoa District. There are a number of other smaller native bush reserves, including Morere Hot Springs Reserve and Mahia Peninsula Bush Reserve.

The DoC, as well as managing these existing reserves, has identified a number of areas of native flora under private ownership which it has designated as "Recommended Areas for

Protection” (RAP). In total, DoC has identified 139 RAPs in the Wairoa district, covering a total area of 24,919 hectares. Much of this is on private land.

Coast The most significant pressures on the coastal environment are new housing developments at Mahia and overfishing around the Mahia Peninsula area. In the 1997 to 2002 period, 42% of Council’s subdivision consents were in the Mahia area.

Current indicators of environmental condition show a high level of recreational water quality at Mahia resort beaches.

Land A large proportion of the district is comprised of hill country, most of which is highly susceptible to erosion and resultant down-stream ill-effects. Analysis of data from Landcare finds that 42% of the Wairoa District is rated at “severe” to “extreme” risk of erosion; this compares to only 36% for the entire Hawkes Bay region. Conversion of farmland to forestry is a trend that will likely reduce erosion and runoff impacts.

There are also potential impacts upon groundwater from conversions of farmland to horticulture and viticulture, though the district has plentiful underground water aquifers. There is a small trend towards organic farming in the district.

Tangata Whenua Increasingly, local iwi and hapu organisations are moving towards formalising their perspectives in regard to resource management, through the development of iwi resource management plans. To date, two iwi resource management plans have been developed. Assessment of Māori-owned land in the Wairoa district finds that a significant proportion of the district is in tangata whenua stewardship.

Pressures The Wairoa district faces a range of natural hazards. Extreme weather and the potential for earthquakes pose the greatest risks.

The most recent extreme weather event was Cyclone Bola in 1988 that caused significant hill country erosion and resulted in the destruction of the Wairoa bridge.

Amenity value impacts include a range of issues, including noise, odour, air quality, glare, shading and public health (related to wandering animal stock and dog control).

Because of the district’s low population density, amenity impacts are not highly significant.

There are, however, public health and odour issues in Wairoa township regards to the AFFCO freezing works plant.

Land use consents over the period 1998 to 2002 reflect amenity value issues in the Wairoa District. In total, 138 land use consents were issued over this period, with 41 (30%) being for yard / height dispensations, 20 (14%) for building relocations, 15 (11%) for earthworks and 14 (10%) for oil and gas exploration.

There are only three identified hazardous sites in the district, with a range of smaller potential hazardous sites that require research into the level of hazard present.

Cultural Assets

Development of a Cultural Profile of Wairoa District would be a lengthy process involving extensive consultation with the local community. As an alternative, this report presents a profile of some of the cultural assets of the district, including: schools, marae, and heritage buildings.

Schools

There are 23 schools in the Wairoa District. These are all primary schools, with one high school (Wairoa College). A high number of rural schools have small rolls. There has been a recent trend of declining school rolls in the Wairoa District, both at Primary School and Secondary School levels.

Most of the schools in the Wairoa district are in the lower socio-economic deciles, reflecting the socio-economic conditions of the district. Extra resourcing is afforded these schools in this regard.

Reflective of the district as a whole, schools in the Wairoa district have a high proportion of students who are of Māori ethnic origin.

Marae

There are over 30 marae in the Wairoa district, which are the centres of iwi, hapu and whanau community life.

Built heritage is defined in this report as all elements of human development on the land of historic significance. This includes a number of historic buildings in Wairoa township and throughout the district, local marae, and historical sites and waahi tapu.

Fortunately, pressures of development on the district's built heritage is not high.