

## MAYORAL COLUMN



Mayor Craig Little

### CLIMATE CHANGE

I commend what the New Zealand Government is trying to achieve in relation to the impact of climate change, but we have to ensure we don't go broke trying to realise the Government's and other's goals.

We must remain realistic and make sure our response to climate change works hand in hand with our economy.

The Government has declared a climate change emergency and committed to achieving its emissions budgets, 2050 targets and its obligations under the Paris Agreement.

The word emergency means, 'a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action'.

Labelling climate change as an emergency diminishes the meaning and future use of the word emergency, such as a Civil Defence emergency.

Climate change is a priority, but it is not an emergency, and our response needs to be realistic and balanced.

It's not that I don't believe in climate change. It has been happening since the beginning of time and will continue to occur while there are human beings in the world.

When I was a young kid, I was concerned about global change and used to talk to my grandfather about the extremes he had been through, drought, severe rain events, frosts, snow, there was even talk of an imminent ice-age. To me we don't seem to be looking back into history enough. Surely, we need to look backwards to look forward.

We also have to make sure the tools we are measuring climate change with today are comparable with what was used when recording first began, we know technology has advanced tremendously and we have to be comparing apples with apples.

I do not doubt that climate change is the biggest environmental challenge of our time, affecting our climate, agriculture, native ecosystems, health and biosecurity and if left unchecked it will have broad social and economic impacts.

Climate change is a double-edged sword. We need to stop the emissions caused by global population growth, but as we know New Zealand needs growth for a healthy economy.

I read an article recently that claimed just 100 companies have been responsible for 71% of global emissions since 1988.

The global community needs to take responsibility. New Zealand's efforts are admirable but for a country that is so small with such a fragile economy are we setting the benchmark too high by trying so hard and yet in the big picture making so little difference?

It seems ironic that we are looking to introduce an across-the-board plan to offset emissions where we should be focussing on eliminating emissions from those who are the perpetrators.

It's about weighing up our response sensibly rather than a knee jerk reaction.

The Climate Change Commission's draft document includes more electric vehicles, accelerated renewable energy generation, climate-friendly farming practices, more forests and reducing livestock numbers by around 15% by 2030.

The plan suggests no new natural gas connections to the network or bottled LPG after 2025 and by 2050, existing natural gas in buildings should be phased out.

It is ironic that not that many years ago people were being encouraged to swap their electricity powered heating and cooking for gas. Where is all this additional electricity going to come from?

Why aren't we looking at initiatives where people are incentivised to install solar/alternative power and have the opportunity to sell power back to the national grid at a reasonable return?

I'm sure there are advantages of green technology like wind, solar and electric cars, but we also need to understand the damage some of these new concepts bring. We know we are already living in a disposable society. What happens to the electric car batteries and

all the other components when they are no longer chargeable or usable? Will it be like the wind turbines in the United States which have a limited life and are then buried?

We have to keep it real, Wairoa has no public transport so that is not an option, and car pooling is challenging for people in rural areas.

The Climate Change Commission reports on reducing livestock and planting more forests but this is not good for our district. Why don't we think more broadly, and as an example ban synthetic carpet manufacturing? Synthetic is - nylon, polyester, acrylic - all of which are petroleum-based products and not sustainable. Wool carpet is natural, eco-friendly and 100% biodegradable.

Imagine how this would help our sheep farmers.

The Government's commitment to increasing our forestry profile is represented by the Billion Trees Programme. But we need to be very careful that the right trees are being planted in the right places. Currently a lot of these plantations are in concentrated areas, like Wairoa, where we should be trying to distribute the planting of trees evenly across the whole country.

And don't lambaste the farmers. We only need to look at what happened during the COVID lockdowns. There were clear skies even though farming continued, it was the manufacturing and factory-type businesses that stopped working that made the difference.

I am aware the Government has not yet accepted the draft advice received from the Climate Change Commission and I urge the Government to tread very carefully and look at both sides of the equation before committing to radical change.

We are such a small country and climate change is a huge global issue. If New Zealand is going to make change then we need to make sure our decisions are balanced and realistic and do not come at the cost of people who can't afford these changes.

Imagine a stock agent driving 116km from Napier to Wairoa and a further 70km on a predominantly unsealed road to the top of the Ruakituri and then return to Napier in an electric car? That is just not realistic.

I am all for doing what we can to meet the challenges of climate change, but not at the expense of our country's social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeings.

These thoughts have been put together from feedback I have been receiving from our community. It is important our community is taken on this journey. It doesn't matter what your opinion is on climate change, as long as there is an awareness and discussion. I look forward to additional feedback.

### WAIROA RACES

The Wairoa race day was held at the Hawke's Bay Hastings racing venue on Sunday. I commend Wairoa Racing Club president Paul Toothill and his team, along with ex-pat and racing supporter Ken Browne, for trying to keep Wairoa's race dates alive. I am actively supporting the Wairoa Racing Club's efforts to bring racing back home.

### YOUTH COUNCIL

Monday saw the inaugural meeting of the Wairoa Youth Council. This meeting was chaired by councillor Melissa Kaimoana with youth representatives from throughout the district around the table.

The Youth Council is in recognition of an intergenerational perspective on Council issues. It will provide an independent youth voice to support the decision-making process at Local Government level.

**I AM REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING MORE FROM THIS GROUP OF UPCOMING LEADERS AND BELIEVE A RANGATAHI VOICE IS PARAMOUNT FOR COUNCILS TO BE ABLE TO PLAN THEIR FUTURES.**

## FOR YOUR DIARY

### PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

### FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Tue, 2 March: 1.30pm

### COUNCIL FORUM

Tue, 9 March: 1.30pm



### CONTACT US

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## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### REVENUE AND FINANCING POLICY & RATES REMISSION AND POSTPONEMENT POLICIES

Council is consulting on its Revenue and Financing Policy & Rates Remission and Postponement Policies.

To make a submission visit [www.consultations.nz/wdc](http://www.consultations.nz/wdc) or pick up a submission form from our Council office.

Consultation closes on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

