

MAYORAL COLUMN



Mayor Craig Little

WAIROA TO RETAIN ITS REGIONAL COUNCIL BOUNDARY

It was a close call, but fortunately the Hawke's Bay Regional Council elected members voted to support Wairoa retaining its current general ward electoral boundaries.

Part of the Hawke's Bay Regional Council proposal to change the constitutional representation of Māori in the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, included a change to general ward boundaries. The proposal incorporated boundary changes to the existing Wairoa general constituency, extending it

south to include Tutira/Esk Valley in order to increase the general electorate population.

Last week, Hawke's Bay Regional Councillors voted five to four to leave Wairoa with one elected member and the same boundary as the current Wairoa District Council area.

I am pleased the councillors came to this decision as I did not want Wairoa's voice diluted by extending our area. I recognise it is a balancing act trying to achieve equitable representation while still representing individual communities of interest, but I did not want to see Wairoa's voice lessened by these changes.

Māori wards were designed to enhance community voice, but in Wairoa's case, a boundary extension could have actually diminished the voice of Wairoa people. Wairoa in itself is a community of interest and making the electorate even larger could have made it unwieldy and less representative of Wairoa.

I was really impressed with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council process. Chief executive James Palmer and his staff did a great job of providing information so their elected members could make an informed decision around electoral representation. Our Hawke's Bay Regional Council representative Charlie Lambert also stood up for our district and presented well.

The regional council voted to increase the number of councillors from nine to 11 councillors to include the two new Māori wards. This final proposal comes following its decision to establish Māori constituencies in May this year and confirms its proposed representation arrangements for the 2022 and 2025 elections.

Two new Māori constituencies are proposed:

Māui ki te Raki – with one elected member to cover the Wairoa District Council and Napier City Council areas, parts of the Hastings District Council area north of the Ngaruroro River, as well as an area within the regional boundary belonging to Taupō District Council

Māui ki te Tonga – one elected member to cover the Central Hawke's Bay District Council area, parts of the Hastings District Council area south of the Ngaruroro River, as well as an area within the regional boundary belonging to Rangitikei District Council.

VACCINATIONS

I am very proud that all my family are now double vaccinated. I know for some people, getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is a big decision to make, but more and more we are seeing how a double vaccination can lessen your likelihood of getting COVID-19, lessen the severity of any illness and complications and lessen your chances of spreading the virus.

In Wairoa, around 62% of people are fully vaccinated and 74% of people have received their first vaccination. I urge anyone who has doubts about having the COVID-19 vaccination to please speak with our local health professionals to ensure you are receiving the correct information.

I really commend the work this government has done around COVID and keeping our country as safe as possible. It is ironic though the government's current health reform will see the end of District Health Boards – the very organisations that are leading the COVID response and vaccination roll out.

The health reform is another situation where it is so important, especially for small areas like Wairoa, that we don't lose our localism and our voice.

THREE WATERS

The most important factor in any relationship is trust, and this government has not demonstrated the basic principles of trust and honesty throughout the three waters reform process.

The government's decision to legislate to mandate local councils to hand over their drinking water, wastewater and storm water assets to four new multi-regional entities does not reflect the concerns of communities and councils.

I have never been against a three waters reform, in fact believe in the need for a national regulator and three waters investment. However, the government's centralisation plan around forming four new multi-regional entities is directly opposed what 60 of the 67 local authorities supported.

This is undemocratic and forced change that goes against what most New Zealanders want. If the Wairoa District Council had made a decision like this which went against everything our community wanted, we would be run out of town.

The government is not listening to the feedback of local communities and iwi. The Minister of Local Government, Nanaia Mahuta, made a commitment to me during a Zoom meeting on August 6, that she would send officials to Wairoa so they could gain information to enable a better understanding of our local Three Waters position. Now, nearly three months on, the government has made a decision and we have still not had a visit.

This government is removing localism from New Zealand and transforming us into a centralised country. This undemocratic system does not work for all of New Zealand. In 2015, Hawke's Bay residents voted overwhelmingly no to a proposal to amalgamate the five local councils. We need to again show government that we want to maintain our autonomy and are prepared to fight to retain our localism.

Entity C, which Wairoa and Hawke's Bay will come under, would see responsibility for our three waters assets and service delivery transfer to a multi-regional entity responsible for the whole of the East Coast of the North Island, the top of the South Island and the Chatham Islands. Entity C will comprise of 21 Councils yet only has six Council representatives. Wairoa's representation of this entity is 1%, our voice will simply not be heard.

We recognise that things cannot always stay the same. That is why Wairoa is part of Hawke's Bay's credible proposal for a regional alternative that would see responsibility for drinking, waste and storm water services staying in Hawke's Bay. Yet this option has been totally overlooked by government.

At the government's request, our Council staff, led by chief executive Kitea Tipuna, completed an incredibly comprehensive submission around the Council and community views on the government's three waters proposal. It appears none of our submission was considered and our questions have certainly not been answered.

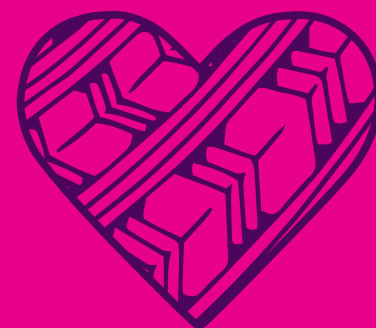
Ironically the government's three waters announcement has come at the same time as Wairoa has been granted a wastewater resource consent by the Hawke's Bay Regional Council. It has taken years and over a million ratepayer dollars to get to this stage and now under this new centralised approach I cannot see how we will ever achieve our community and iwi goal of land based, rather than awa based, discharge.

This decision by the government will affect all communities and I urge everyone to please share your opinions with our local MPs who I'm sure will be interested in your thoughts. Wairoa District Council will now meet locally, regionally and with our community and iwi to hear their opinions. Moving forward, like-minded Councils need to work collaboratively to fight this ridiculous mandate. The government's reform plan is widely opposed, involves many

u n a n s w e r e d questions has been a flawed rushed process and comprises misleading facts. New Zealanders must rally together and not allow this reform to go ahead.



TAUTOKO WAIROA



SHOP LOCAL

FOR YOUR DIARY

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING: THREE WATERS

NEXT STEPS Tuesday 9:
November 10.30am

FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Tuesday, November 9: 1.30pm

COUNCIL FORUM

Tuesday, November 16: 1.30pm

MATANGIRAU RESERVES BOARD

Monday, 22 November: 3.30pm

COUNCIL

Tuesday, 30 November: 1.30pm

Under Level 2 all meetings will be held by video conference, the link will be available on Council's website.



CONTACT US

Wairoa District Council
Queen St, Wairoa
info@wairoadc.govt.nz
(06) 838 7309