

MAYORAL COLUMN

THREE WATERS

I am pleased there is a lot of discussion around the government's three waters reform and what the government's proposal means for all of us. Our elected members have made no secret of the fact we are not in favour of the proposal as we have not seen any evidence that Wairoa would be better off being in an entity where our representation will only be 1%.

There is a lot of misinformation and propaganda being thrown around. For example, the Department of Internal Affairs

(DIA) quoted that if the three waters reform did not go ahead, it would cost Wairoa ratepayers an extra \$8,690 per year by 2051, the most in Hawke's Bay. This figure is not correct. Wairoa District Council, like other Councils around New Zealand, had this figure peer-reviewed by experts as the costings did not add up. We discovered the DIA did not arrive at this figure by data but made an economic assumption and increased the figure from the \$3,200 that Wairoa District Council was projecting.

Three waters issues are a nationwide problem caused by decades of under-investment. Reasons for the under-investment include lack of funding provided by successive governments, communities requesting minimal rate increases which has meant Councils do as much as possible to upgrade three waters infrastructure within budgetary constraints, and the government changing three waters legislative requirements but not providing Councils with funding to meet these changes.

We have seen what can be achieved through the one-off \$11 million stimulus funding the government gave us 18 months ago and the progress Wairoa has made.

Back in 2017, we identified our town had significant wastewater system issues. Wairoa's town wastewater system was seriously compromised and unreliable, with rainwater inundating the system and overflowing to manholes and partially working pump stations were overflowing to the river.

Wairoa's annual overall wastewater discharge was 500 million litres more than the potable water volume being supplied to local homes. This was specifically due to rainwater/stormwater infiltrating the wastewater system.

Over the past five years, Council has made a significant investment to mitigate the effects of rain/stormwater entering the wastewater network. To achieve this, we have gathered CCT data over 40% of the town's underground pipes and as a result have relined about four kilometres, or 10%, of the underground network.

We have upgraded pump stations with chopper pumps and backup generators and upgraded our control system. We have removed over 400 illegal private property stormwater connections to the sewer network and over the past five years have reduced treated wastewater discharge by a staggering 70%.

Our approach has been, and still is, to work alongside regulators such as the Ministry of Health and Hawke's Bay Regional Council to align Council to best practice, benchmarking against international standard, partnering with the community, and utilising external

funding to develop a more measurable and transparent platform for all key stakeholders.

Recent significant rain events highlighted there are still opportunities to continue to improve, although during these recent events there were no town wastewater faults or breaches of consent reported. We have also embarked on a journey to irrigate wastewater through a land-based model and recently installed a new wastewater filtration unit that is 30 times better than the old unit resulting in a healthier wastewater treatment plant and wastewater discharge.

The work to date has produced significant improvements which will help deliver long-term financial and environmental benefits.

As an aside and out of interest, the New Zealand Taxpayers' Union 'Stop Three Waters Roadshow' will be passing through Wairoa on Saturday and will be at the Lighthouse Reserve from 11.30am.

MATARIKI

The first public holiday to celebrate Matariki is tomorrow, on Friday, 24 June 2022. The Government has committed to ensuring mātauranga Māori is at the heart of celebrations of the Matariki public holiday, and it will be a time for:

- Remembrance – Honouring those who we have lost since the last rising of Matariki
- Celebrating the present – Gathering together to give thanks for what we have
- Looking to the future – Looking forward to the promise of a new year I know our local Matariki celebrations have also been well supported and last week's community event, including the fireworks, was a fantastic evening.

TELL US WHAT YOU REALLY THINK

There is a week left for you to have your say about what you think about the way Council operates, how we make decisions and what other activities we should be doing.

Council's resident and ratepayer satisfaction survey is a regular feature and provides an opportunity to hear feedback on what we do well, and where we can improve.

It is important we hear open and honest feedback around what our community thinks as that will help us to deliver the best possible facilities and services across our district.

The survey is designed to take 5-10 minutes to complete and is open to everyone, other than elected or staff members of the Wairoa District Council and their household members.

To take the survey please go to <https://feedback.askyourteam.com/AhlfPci> or scan the code below to be taken directly to the website. Or you can collect a hardcopy of the survey from the Wairoa District Council office on Queen Street, the library or i-Site. The survey is live until next Wednesday, 29th June 2022. We look forward to hearing from you.

NETBALL AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

Well done to all those netball players and supporters who are showcasing this great sport. It is fantastic to see netball being played in town on a Saturday morning again, and the number of players is evidence this is very much wanted by our community.

Also, congratulations to the Wairoa men's netball team which came second in the B Grade of the recent Te Ika A Maui - North Island Men's Netball Club championships.

This was a young team with eight of the players under the age of 21, and 10 of the squad living in Wairoa. It is great to see the energy behind the players and supporters and I look forward to following your journey - as I am sure this is just the start.

TE REINGA BRIDGE

The March and April wet weather events have certainly reminded us to not take connectivity for granted. I really feel for the Ruakituri community and the impact the structural damage to the Te Reinga Bridge has had on their lives and livelihoods.

It was great to get the temporary design for the bridge sorted in such a quick timeframe, but this is a temporary solution and further closures, particularly over winter, are likely.

Council staff and engineers did everything right by closing the bridge recently after more rainfall increased the river level. We believe it was high river levels that caused the damage to the bridge piers in the first place so of course it is reasonable to take all safety precautions when the river is again running high.

You only have to think about how heavy a 20-litre container of water is to understand the pressure the piers must come under, particularly on a high-level receding river. I know a great deal of time has been spent monitoring how the bridge piers will react and I thank our staff and contractors for their above and beyond dedication to keeping our residents safe.

A reminder only one vehicle on the bridge at a time, there is a three-tonne limit and 10km speed limit. Also please be prepared that the bridge is likely to be closed again and we thank everyone in advance for their patience.



local people.
local impact.

Stand for our local council to make a positive difference for our local community.



**NOMINATIONS OPEN JULY 15
AND CLOSE 12 NOON AUGUST 12**

FOR YOUR DIARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, June 28 1.30pm

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING Thursday, June 30, 1.30pm

YOUTH COUNCIL Monday, July 4 3.30pm

FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE Tuesday, July 5, 1.30pm

CONTACT US

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



Mayor Craig Little

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• NOW LIVE •
RESIDENTS SURVEY 2022

TE WAIROA