

MAYORAL COLUMN

STAFFING CHALLENGES COMPOUNDED BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Retaining and recruiting staff is a massive challenge for Councils throughout New Zealand as they face market changes and government agency staff poaching pressures.

Local authority staff across the country are being targeted by Central Government and lured by lucrative employment packages. This massive increase of civil servant positions, as also seen in the government's budget, has caused a vacuum of trained local authority

A worst-case scenario could be around three waters services, where central government poaches trained Council staff, which means Councils will then struggle to deliver services and the government will use this as another reason to support the Three Waters Reform - when in fact the situation has been created by Central Government. Enticing staff with higher salaries demonstrates the Government can pay what it wants with no accountability to the public or constraints on its spending, unlike local government.

I find it ironic Central Government is paying so much for these new positions when there are other public service staff, such as nurses and other essential workers, who have been advocating for pay rises for years. It is also ironic, that not that long ago the government was pushing for wage freezes because of COVID-19, and yet is now behind these huge salaries.

Central Government has a total disconnect when it comes to the confines that Local Government operates under. How can we operate on a level playing field when Local Government spending is constantly held to account by our ratepayers, as it should be, yet Central government appears to have an open cheque book? How can inflation possibly be kept under control while the government keeps spending like it is. We should be able to work in partnership and rely on Central Government, but in fact the government is totally undermining local authorities.

It is taxpayer money that is being used to pay for these higher government salaries. Central government should operate under the same accountability it expects from local government.

THERE'S A LOT GOING ON

It is great that Wairoa's Gaiety Theatre has secured premiere screenings of the Lion King in te reo Māori and New Zealand Film 'Whina'. The Lion King in te reo will premiere at the Gaiety on Thursday, June 23 at 5.30pm and the next day, June 24, the Gaiety will have two premiere screenings of 'Whina' at 5.30pm and 8pm.

'Whina' is the story of Dame Whina Cooper, the beloved Māori matriarch who worked tirelessly to improve the rights of her people, especially women. Flawed yet resilient, 'Whina' tells the story of a woman formed by tradition, compelled by innovation, and guided by an instinct for equality and justice whose legacy as the Te Whaea o te Motu (Mother of the Nation) was an inspiration to an entire country.

Tickets for 'Whina' are \$10 each and are available for pre-sale at the Wairoa i-Site. As this is a premiere event vouchers will not be valid. The Lion King screening will be by door sales with pre-sales available from the Gaiety during opening hours.

It was great to see the Gaiety and other venues utilised as part of the Māori Film Festival. This is a tremendous uniquely Wairoa event and I congratulate and thank everyone for their continued hard work in keeping this event local.

I know also our community will be looking forward to celebrating Matariki 2022 and the Matariki holiday on Friday, June 24.

Locally a whānau concert will be held at the Wairoa Community Centre on June 17 from 6pm. This will include a night of entertainment and fundraising stalls and looks to be a great night out.

WALKING AND CYCLING STRATEGY

Council is currently seeking feedback on Te Rautaki mō te Hikoikoi me te Eke Paihikara Walking and Cycling Strategy.

This strategy is about planning for future connectivity on how people would like walking and cycling to be integrated into the Wairoa district in the future. The strategy is an expression of the vision and goals the Council has for walking and cycling in the Wairoa community and outlines key goals centred around connectivity, safety, ease, availability, awareness and healthy lifestyle choices.

Wairoa's size makes it possible to integrate walking and cycling into everyday life, whether as a commuting or recreational activity. This is a great advantage for our community, as walking and cycling can play a crucial role in keeping our people healthy. Beyond the health benefits, walking and cycling is good for the environment, and an affordable way to get around.

The Walking and Cycleway Strategy sets the scene for walking and cycling in the district. Since the strategy was implemented, there has been an extension to the Wairoa River Walkway to the Whakamahia Beach Reserve and construction of the Wairoa Mountain Bike Park.

For cycling and walking to be integrated into the district's future it's important to find out now just how important cycling and walking opportunities are for our people. This is not about funding; it is purely about hearing the aspirations of our people. If feedback is that people want more walking and cycling tracks, then that is vital information for us to have and can be factored into any future planning.

"We look forward to hearing your thoughts at <https://www.consultations.nz/wdc/walking-and-cycling-strategy/>. The engagement period will run until 30 June 2022.

WAIROA FINANCIAL LITERACY SERVICE

It was great to hear the Wairoa Financial Literacy Service successfully received funding from the NZ Banking Association and Fincap (National Financial Capability Trust).

Council supported this funding application which will assist our community with electronic banking issues and services and is a particularly necessary activity for our community following the closure of all our banks, other than Kiwibank, and the loss of most face-to-face interaction.

The Wairoa Financial Literacy Service is a great local facility managed by Ngaio Bell and supported by financial mentors Marilyn Ioakimi and Tracey Couper who was previously with BNZ.

Tracey provides banking support and is available to assist with instruction for all banking services and the use of the Smart ATM. Tracey can be contacted by phoning 06 838 6964 or 027 3816546

The Wairoa Financial Literacy Service is also launching a series of courses focussed on homes. The Home Ownership course is centred around people purchasing their own homes and the Ready to Rent course can assist in the ability to secure accommodation that is possibly hindered by bad credit.

The programme begins today and will run over the next 12 months. To register for future courses and for further information please contact Wairoa Housing Strategy Coordinator Melissa, on 027 3507800 or course facilitator Marilyn on 06 838 6921.



Mayor Craig Little

staff across the country.

The post-COVID-19 marketplace is being compounded by the government's increases in government staffing which is seeing unprecedented salary increases. This is going to have a huge affect on Councils, like Wairoa, and all workplaces, making it challenging to compete to attract and retain staff.

It is disappointing that a strong influence on the changing marketplace is Central Government paying at least 25% more than local government for staff to carry out the same role as they do for Councils.

This is not a level playing field and again demonstrates the huge disconnect between Central Government and Councils and communities.

The erosion of Council jobs began with the Government's accreditation and registration of Consentium, New Zealand's first accredited and non-registered non-Territorial Building Consent Authority.

Consentium was established by Government Department Kāinga Ora - Homes and Communities, to process building consents for public housing. This centralised authority is a division of Kāinga Ora and processes building consents that would have previously been processed by territorial authorities - like the Wairoa District Council.

I query why New Zealand needs another building consent authority when Councils all across New Zealand already do this job? This is not about our staff members who have left or are leaving. I don't blame staff for leaving when they are being offered so much more pay, why wouldn't you go to a significantly higher paid job? This is about Central Government expecting Local Government to deliver, but not ensuring we have the resources, support or staff to achieve that.

Why, when we have predicted Wairoa will need 500 homes in the next 10 years, is Kāinga Ora not sticking to its lane and its core business and building new homes in Wairoa, instead of duplicating services and taking our staff? Creating this new building consent strand simply takes away from local authorities and creates a lack of consistency, accountability and loss of local knowledge. Kāinga Ora should not be duplicating services that are, and should be, provided by an independent authority.

The Wairoa District Council has lost staff to Consentium, and now, the government's new national water regulator Taumatua Arowai and the national transition unit responsible for setting up the four new three water entities is also advertising for staff with high paid jobs that pay more than Councils are paying.



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RESIDENTS SURVEY 2022

TE WAIROA

FOR YOUR DIARY
PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

MAORI STANDING COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 9 (today) 1.30pm

COUNCIL

Tuesday, June 14 1.30pm

ANNUAL PLAN HEARINGS

Wednesday, June 15, 9am

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 21 1.30pm

CONTACT US

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