

## MAYORAL COLUMN

### WAIROA'S ECONOMY STRONG

I was recently sent a presentation which was put together by principal economist Brad Olsen of Informetrics, a leading NZ economic consultancy which delivers economic insights and data on NZ's industries and regions.

It was great to see Hawke's Bay's economy among the strongest in the country. Within our region Hastings is leading the pack followed closely by Wairoa, then Napier and Central Hawke's Bay.



Mayor Craig Little

Together Hawke's Bay and Gisborne are leading the regions when it comes to stronger economic outcomes. This data is based on the annual economic activity estimates as of March 2022, compared to the pre-pandemic period as of March 2020.

The top sectors that are performing well in Hawke's Bay are construction, agri/forestry and fishing, and health. Local spending is also tracking well with Wairoa leading the Hawke's Bay region with a 25% increase on 2019 spending. This is measured by card spending.

The presentation noted it is harder and more expensive to grow in 2022 with other observations that there are still more than 100,000 people isolating because of COVID-19 across New Zealand, and consumer confidence has never been worse.

The report noted there are strong pressures around increasing wages, it is harder than ever to hold onto staff and there is a real risk of brain drain as New Zealanders head overseas.

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.

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 impact on Councils, like Wairoa, and all workplaces, making it challenging to compete to attract and retain staff.

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

The presentation went on to say food prices are rising at the fastest in a decade and fuel costs are soaring at around a 39% increase. Costs are continuing to rise, including interest costs and treasury sees inflation staying higher for longer.

From a housing perspective, In Hawke's Bay sales are down 18% from a year ago and the number of properties available for sale are rising in line with a sharp slowdown in the housing market. There is also an increasing need for housing support.

Wairoa District Council is working as a housing enabler in partnership with local iwi and providers in relation to residential developments in the district. A working group comprising the Wairoa District Council, iwi and local providers has been established in response to Wairoa's housing shortage.

The group has identified housing demand in the district is outpacing supply. Wairoa is short of around 150 homes now, but with the expected population growth, could have a shortage of around 500 homes over the next 10 years.

While it was reassuring to see Wairoa's economy and spending stacking up well, this was just one snapshot and as we all know, we are living in volatile times, and we have seen how quickly things can change.

### THREE WATERS

Three waters issues are a nationwide problem caused by decades of under-investment 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.

The government's new model is not based on additional funding. It is simply creating new entities to borrow money to deliver what Councils are already delivering.

So, under the government's proposal, in Wairoa you will still pay rates for all the other services you receive from Council, and then you will get another bill from the new water entity to pay your share of the three waters costs - for the whole of Entity C - from the top of the East Coast down to Wellington and including the top of the South Island and the Chatham Islands.

This will be another bill sent from a centralised location and instead of just paying for your services in Wairoa, you will be paying your share for the whole Entity.

My concern for our small isolated and vulnerable district is we will lose local skills, knowledge and experience and worst of all, as we have seen time and time again, centralised systems do not work for Wairoa, and we are so often at the bottom of the pecking order.

Taking three waters away from the Wairoa District Council is similar to us losing our banks, having no Wairoa based dentist, optometrist, specialised shoe or clothing shops. This is just another erosion of localism where the government is creating a barrier that prevents us having parity with the rest of New Zealand.

These new three waters entities are not a magic funding bullet. It is simply centralisation, where the delivery of services and ownership of assets are being taken away from Councils, who have been responsible for three waters on behalf of our ratepayers for over 100 years, and our assets given away to an as yet unknown entity.

Do not forget these three waters assets are owned by our communities who have paid for them through their rates. The government shows no acknowledgement of the decades of investment by local communities and work and delivery by local councils.

I am not suggesting Wairoa's three waters infrastructure or delivery is perfect. But at least it is local, and we can rely on our local knowledge and expertise with people on the ground living in our district to draw on when we need them. Under the Government's three waters reform, Wairoa would be in Entity C along with 20 other Councils and our makeup would represent 1% of this entity.

Wairoa needs a sustainable three waters solution to protect future generations and the environment. I have seen no evidence that the government's current proposal will make Wairoa any better off.

### NOW IS THE TIME TO REGISTER YOUR DOG

The Wairoa District Council dog registration period began on July 1, and if you register your dog before August 31, you can take advantage of discounted pricing.

Registering your dog with your local Council is a requirement in New Zealand and is part of being a responsible dog owner. Dog registration forms are being sent to dog owners via email or post and all dogs over the age of three months need to be registered by August 31, 2021.

Once you receive your registration notice, please check to make sure your details are correct and up to date, especially if you have or are moving out of the district or have changed the number of dogs you own.

If you would like more information or require assistance with registering your dog, the team is always happy to help. Head over to [www.wairoadc.govt.nz](http://www.wairoadc.govt.nz) or get in touch with our Compliance Team [compliance@wairoadc.govt.nz](mailto:compliance@wairoadc.govt.nz) or phone Council on 06 838 7309.

### LOCAL BODY NOMINATIONS OPEN ON FRIDAY

This year's local body election is just three months away. Nominations for the Mayor and councillors open this Friday, July 15 and close midday on Friday, August 12, 2022.

The upcoming election will be held on Saturday, October 8, 2022. Locally the Wairoa District Council is made up of a Mayor and six councillors. The councillor seats are split into three Māori Ward seats and three General Ward seats.

As well as voting in the Wairoa District Council election Wairoa voters will be able to vote for the Wairoa representative on the Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

To be eligible to stand for election, a candidate must be a New Zealand citizen, enrolled as a Parliamentary elector and nominated by two electors whose names appear on the respective electoral roll within the area that a candidate is standing for.

If you are an enrolled voter, you'll receive a voting information pack in the mail. Enrol, check or update your details here, [www.vote.nz/enrolling/enrol-or-update/enrol-or-update-online/](http://www.vote.nz/enrolling/enrol-or-update/enrol-or-update-online/).

Voting papers will be sent to all eligible voters from Friday, September 16, 2022. Voting will close at 12 noon on Saturday, October 8, 2022.

For more information go to [www.votelocal.co.nz](http://www.votelocal.co.nz)  
A candidates' information briefing will be held on July 18 at the War Memorial Hall from 6-7.30pm.



### Local people. Local impact.

Stand for our local council.

Nominations open Friday 15 July  
and close 12 noon Friday 12 August.

Visit [wairoadc.govt.nz](http://wairoadc.govt.nz) for more info.



### FOR YOUR DIARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

COUNCIL FORUM  
Tuesday, July 12, 1.30pm

MAORI STANDING COMMITTEE  
Thursday, July 21, 1.30pm

CONTACT US  
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Queen St, Wairoa  
[info@wairoadc.govt.nz](mailto:info@wairoadc.govt.nz) (06) 838 7309

