

WAIROA DISTRICT COUNCIL IN FOCUS

Mayor Craig Little



MAYORAL COLUMN

WAIROA MAYORAL RELIEF FUND

The Wairoa Mayoral Relief Fund, established in response to the impact of Cyclone Gabrielle and the subsequent heavy rainfall event, is now open for applications.

The fund comprises just over \$1 million made up of donations and just over \$200,000 from the Givealittle fundraiser page. Donations are ongoing.

This fund only exists because of the generosity of the people who have made donations. These donors wanted the funding to go directly to support Wairoa people who are most in need. We are tremendously grateful for the generosity of hundreds of people whose donations will help our whānau rebuild in the wake of such destruction.

The first tranche of funding will see \$600,000 distributed to directly support local people and will enable donors to see how their generosity can help our local people, businesses, groups and organisations. It will prioritise white, yellow and red stickered households, affected businesses including landowners and land users, impacted marae, churches, community organisations and groups, as well as community groups supporting the clean-up at their expense.

Applications will be considered based on immediate recognised needs in the community and where the applicant has suffered a financial loss or is experiencing financial hardship because of the weather events.

A panel to review applications and allocate the Mayoral Relief Fund will be appointed by myself and will include the Chair of Wairoa Taiwhenua and community members. The panel will also include the independent member on Council's Finance, Assurance and Risk committee.

Receiving funds from the local fund does not prevent people from also applying for additional funds available from other sources including the greater Hawke's Bay Relief Fund, Central Government business support, as well as various individuals and businesses offering help and through Givealittle funding. Applications can now be made by scanning the QR code or the following link, <https://www.wairoadc.govt.nz/our-council/cyclone-gabrielle/wairoa-mayoral-relief-fund?stage=Stage>, or call into the Wairoa District Council offices to collect a form, or ask for assistance and a staff member will fill out the form with you.



STATE HIGHWAY ROADS

I am liaising with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, but it seems reopening SH2 between Wairoa and Napier is still months away. I know this is a real concern and I will continue to advocate on behalf of our community.

Waka Kotahi has committed it will officially reopen SH 38 over the next week. This is good news as considering the fragility of our roading networks into and out of Wairoa, we need to ensure we have all the lifelines possible.

RATES

I would like to reassure people whose homes have been affected by flooding that Council wants to support you and is continuing to provide options around the late payment of rates due to the impact of Cyclone Gabrielle.

If you have been affected by the cyclone and are struggling to pay your rates, then no penalties will be applied if you pay your rates late. By temporarily suspending the penalties for late payments

we hope we are taking one less worry away for people who are affected in our community.

We hope those people who have not been impacted will still be able to make their payments. If people are dealing with hardship, they can also call or email to discuss alternative payment arrangements. Please email rates@wairoadc.govt.nz or phone 06 838 7309.

ROADSHOW

Unfortunately, the Wairoa District Council Roadshow, 'A chance to chat' has been cancelled due to the impact of Cyclone Gabrielle. The roadshow had begun earlier in February with a great response from the four areas that were visited, Tuai, Frasertown, Ruakituri and Marumaru. The information gathered from the first four events has been kept and collated so has not been wasted. Obviously, our situation has changed a lot over the past couple of weeks. However, the feedback that we did receive will be fed into future decision-making.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Prior to Cyclone Gabrielle, elected members met to determine our strategic approach over the next three years. While some of our direction has been skewed due to the damage inflicted on our district by these extreme weather events, it is still important we have a clear shared sense of direction as we move forward as a Council and endeavour to place our district in the best position possible.

As a country, New Zealand is facing immense pressures, particularly from a financial and increased costs perspective. This is the most troubling time I have seen our country in since I became Mayor. The combination of COVID-19 nationally and globally, increasing costs and extreme weather events are impacting everybody. We are all facing cost hikes which affect our own households and equally impact on Councils and what it costs to deliver key services.

While the Wairoa District Council is in a fairly healthy financial position, to continue operating at our present levels it is likely we will have to borrow more money and increase our debt. This impacts our ratepayers as we have to pay interest on loans and pay the loans back. As always, we are very cautious about the cost to the ratepayer.

The time has now come for Local Government to have parity with Central Government over the funding we receive. We have been through a period of a continual lack of Central Government funding and investment which is placing additional pressure on our communities and Council. If the current Central Government limitations around funding continue, along with the spiralling cost escalations, our Council, and I am sure many others, will not be able to deliver core services at the required standards and that is a very scary thought. As a Council, we are struggling to stay ahead and further hefty rate increases are simply not sustainable for our communities.

Over the past couple of years, I believe the relationship between Central and Local Government has been strained and that does not serve either taxpayers or ratepayers well. My hope is that moving forward Central Government will work to enable, rather than disable, small communities like Wairoa, so we can continue to grow - even during these challenging times. We want a meaningful partnership with Central Government and hope Central Government can begin to understand the importance of the role of Local Government in delivering key core services throughout the entire country.

Central Government has been supporting affected people in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle, and now also the needs of local authorities need to be addressed. I am hopeful our Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins, will be successful in his plans to visit Wairoa today and I will be discussing some of our concerns with him.

FOR YOUR DIARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Finance, Assurance and Risk Committee:

Tuesday, March 21, 1pm

Council:

Tuesday, March 28, 1.30pm

CONTACT US

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



SPORT NZ Rural Travel Fund

Applications for financial assistance through the SPORT NZ Rural Travel Fund (Formerly SPARC) are now open.

Approximately \$11,352 is available for distribution to local rural sports clubs and school teams with members aged between 5-19 years who require subsidies to assist with transport expenses to local sporting competitions.

Applicants will need to meet the eligibility criteria of the Rural Travel Fund.

Application forms and further information are available from: Latoya Tipuna, email latoya@wairoadc.govt.nz or call into the Wairoa District Council offices or i-Site or phone 06 838 7309.

For more information please refer:



Applications close
Friday, April 21, 2023

Kitea Tipuna
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER