

Mayoral Column | 14 March 2024



TE RERENGA KŌTUKU OFF TO THE NATIONALS

It was fantastic to attend Te Matatini regional finals in Dannevirke and see such outstanding performances, particularly from our local kapa haka groups.

Te Rerenga Kotuku and Matangirau both stepped on the stage with Te Rerenga Kōtuku off to the nationals and set to represent Ngāti Kahungunu at Te Matatini in New Plymouth next year.

Te Matatini is a nationwide Māori performing arts festival and competition for kapa haka performers from all over New Zealand. Te Rerenga Kōtuku finished second, with Te Rangiura o Wairarapa winning the regionals.

Wairoa certainly demonstrated its talent and culture. I admire all those people who took part. I know it takes a tremendous amount of dedication and commitment. Well done to you all.

It was also a pleasure to meet Pā Ariki from Rarotonga at the regional finals. What a beautiful lady and with Wairoa connections!

HAWKE'S BAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CYCLONE RECOVERY FUND

Is your business bouncing back from Cyclone Gabrielle?

The Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce is coming to Wairoa on Tuesday, March 19, to assist local businesses in accessing the Hawke's Bay Cyclone Recovery Fund!

The fund provides up to \$2,000 in funding for training in areas like business resilience, financial planning, and marketing and focuses on turning recovery into growth.

To register, head to <https://web.regionalbusinesspartners.co.nz/business/registration/>

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The Wairoa District Council is working on its Long-Term Plan, which, because of the impact of Cyclone Gabrielle, focuses on the next three years rather than 10 years.

It is important that we are all aware that when things go wrong, fixing them comes at a price. Councils across the country in cyclone-hit areas face substantial cost increases to rebuild in the wake of the disaster. Without external funding, Wairoa's

rate increase for the 2024/25 year is anticipated to be double figures. We will do everything we can to keep any rate increase as low as possible, but we also need to be realistic.

Our whole country is bearing the brunt of the cost of living, and for Councils, it is no different. I really hope our new coalition government will review the current central-local government funding model, as what is currently in place is not sustainable.

A recent S&P Global Ratings says New Zealand's public debt remains low, but local Councils have insufficient revenue to fund their infrastructure responsibilities. The credit rating agency showed that local government rates have not increased as a percentage of the economy in the past 100 years.

Meanwhile, central government taxation had risen from below 10% of gross domestic product in the early 1900s to over 30% today. NZ councils' debt levels are already much higher than similarly rated peers in Northern European countries—at about 180% of revenue—and more investment is needed. An S&P Ratings analyst said Councils had been “increasingly burdened” with new central government standards such as drinking water quality and earthquake resilience. These additional costs had not been matched by financial support or financing tools besides a few contestable grant schemes.

Hopefully, our government recognises this situation and will help create a more level playing field.

While getting whānau back in their homes is a priority, we also have infrastructure work to complete, particularly around roading and repairing Council assets that were affected during and after the cyclone. There have been significant cyclone-related impacts on our three waters and waste management, and there is still much work to be done in these spaces.

Moving forward with confirmed future flood protection is critical to addressing the housing issue. While the government has ring-fenced \$70 million for Wairoa for this purpose, agreeing on the best options is difficult. There will always be impacted property and people, and there are still hard conversations ahead of us.

Post-cyclone, we have some enormous challenges that are controlled externally from Wairoa but significantly impact us. We need improved roading into and out of our district. As we head into another winter, it is unacceptable that SH2 could close when it rains. I look forward to progress on the Waikare Gorge and Devil's Elbow projects to provide more resilience to our connectivity.

We also need to continue to push for the return of vital services, such as an aged care facility and Idea



Mayor Craig Little

MEET THE MAYOR KANOHI KI TE KANOHI

If you would like to have a meeting with the Mayor, call the council offices on 06 838 7309 to arrange a meeting time. He is available to meet with people on Wednesdays.

FOR YOUR DIARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

**TE ROHE O TE WAIROA
RESERVES BOARD MATANGIRAU**
Tuesday, March 19, 10am

**STRATEGY, WELLBEING AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE**
Tuesday, March 19, 1.30pm

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND
REGULATORY COMMITTEE**
Tuesday, March 26, 10am

**FINANCE, ASSURANCE AND
RISK COMMITTEE**
Tuesday, March 26, 1.30pm

Services. Our people are under a huge amount of stress, and some of it is avoidable - if the providers would just step up.

We also need to continue working with the Hawkes Bay Regional Council. Our district needs to be recognised as a major, significant 'land and water mass' and, as such, given the priority it deserves rather than basing inputs on population.