



Wairoa Mayor
Craig Little

FROM MAYOUR CRAIG LITTLE Local Government Reform

In 2015, more than 80 per cent of Wairoa voters overwhelmingly rejected council amalgamation and the creation of a 'Hawke's Bay super council'.

The Government is now pushing reform to create larger unitary authorities, which risks diluting local representation, community and Māori voice, institutional knowledge, and eroding services, particularly in rural communities like Wairoa.

Council wants to hear what our communities think of the government's approach. We need your thoughts so we can represent our people and push for what our district wants. Our focus is on preserving local democracy, but how that looks needs to come from our community. As a district, we need to decide whether we accept a more regionalised form of representation for Wairoa or fight it.

Local Government exists to provide democratic, community-led decision-making priorities and promote the social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing of communities at the grassroots level. Decisions are more effective and cost-efficient when they are made close to the people affected.

The Ministers behind this reform should be asking what is broken? To me, it is the funding model, revenue volatility and legislative confines. I don't think making bigger/super councils will fix this. Wairoa has experienced that bigger is not always better. Funding limitations, where councils rely on rates as the main source of revenue, is the biggest problem. Councils receive external funding from Central Government,

but it is mostly project-based, meaning the cost of day-to-day work is met by ratepayers.

I agreed with the Government's initial reform programme of removing the additional tier of regional councils and the Government's rates capping. However, reform has now morphed from removing regional councils into a broader push for amalgamation. This approach has gone too far. I would have thought the Government had plenty of other priority areas to work on rather than local government reforms - particularly as it is local government that is picking up the pieces from other underperforming government agencies/sectors.

The Wairoa district is over 30% of the Hawke's Bay area, but Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC) funding and decision-making is based on our small population - not our large landmass. A solution for Wairoa, more than likely not supported by the government, could be to become a unitary authority in our own right, continuing the functions of the Wairoa District Council and absorbing the HBRC's functions as they relate to Wairoa. Otherwise, we will be absorbed into Hawke's Bay or Tairāwhiti.

We have experienced the devastation caused by HBRC's failure to listen to our local voice and knowledge, which contributed to the June 2024 flooding event. HBRC has recently cut Wairoa-based jobs, an example of an erosion of services for Wairoa. This is a massive loss of the local catchment and land-use management knowledge - at a time when we need it more than ever.

I remember a well-respected retired MP telling me it would be lucky if 3-4% of MPs know anything about

Local Government, and this reform approach hammers that home. Reform should focus on improving flexibility and collaboration among councils, not forcing mergers between communities with different priorities and operational needs. A "one size fits all" approach risks reducing accountability, weakening resilience, and eroding local relationships that are essential to effective governance. This reform has missed the opportunity to investigate whether local government could deliver other services at grass level, like many other Councils around the world.

We will continue working with our community and local MPs to look at scenarios, including Wairoa becoming its own unitary authority with possible boundary adjustments, absorption into a Hawke's Bay unitary authority, combining with Napier, or joining with Gisborne. We do not want a model that reduces local accountability, marginalises rural districts, slows responses to urgent issues, and results in the loss of critical localised institutional knowledge and relationships.

Our Council will hold meetings throughout our district, and we will be in touch with details about these hui. Please email any thoughts and opinions to feedback@wairoadc.govt.nz

Council Meetings

Matangirau Reserves Board
Tuesday 26 May 1pm

Assurance, Risk & Infrastructure Committee
Wednesday 27 May 1pm

Council Forum
Tuesday 2 June 10am

Ordinary Meeting of Council
Tuesday 2 June 1pm

Environment & Economic Development Committee
Tuesday 9 June 1pm

Catch up with Mayor Craig Kanohi ki te Kanohi Face to Face

If you have anything you would like to discuss with the Mayor, please call the council offices on 06 838 7309 to arrange a meeting time.

The Mayor is available to meet on Wednesdays or by appointment.

The
GAIETY
Cinema & Theatre
★ ★ ★

Now Showing
May 21 - 28

<p>The Mandalorian & Grogu PREMIERE M 2hr 12m Thursday 21st May 5.30pm Friday 22nd May 8pm</p> <p>The Devil Wears Prada 2 M 1hr 53m Saturday 23rd May 5.30pm</p> <p>Mortal Kombat 2 R16 1hr 56m Wednesday 27th May 5.30pm</p>	<p>Michael M 2hr 10m Friday 22nd May 5.30pm</p> <p>The Super Mario Galaxy Movie PG 1hr 38m Sunday 24th May 11.30am</p> <p>Hoppers PG 1hr 45m Saturday 23rd May 2pm</p> <p>SGT. Haane M 1hr 28m Sunday 24th May 2pm</p>
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WAIROA MATARIKI MOVIE IN THE PARK

Wairoa Community Centre
Thursday 11 June 4pm - 6pm

WAIROA MATARIKI WHANAU CONCERT

Wairoa Community Centre
Friday 12 June 6pm - 8pm

Performances
Lantern Ceremony
Maumahara
Kai Stalls
Fireworks Display




