

28 February 2023

Hutt City Council submission for the Review into the Future for Local Government

Tēnā tātou e ngā manu tū tāhuna, e ngā manu tū rae,

Hutt City Council appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the Review into the Future for Local Government. We are clear about our purpose – we want Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai Lower Hutt to be a city where everyone thrives. We are committed to a pathway of partnership, collaboration, and support with and for our people.

Local government is closest to the people and community wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do. We are kaitiaki, stewards, of our place and our people. Our obligation is to make decisions not just on behalf of today's ratepayers, but for our children and our children's children. We lift our focus beyond the three-year electoral term to plan and deliver outcomes that will deliver a vibrant and resilient future for our place and people.

Our submission outlines that a new economic model is needed at all levels of government that focuses on equity, wellbeing, resilience and social inclusion that has kaitiakitanga, thriving and good stewardship at the centre, rather than on GDP growth.

If we continue down the path of piecemeal changes to status quo public service models, we miss the opportunity for enhanced community wellbeing, whānau and families will struggle more, and individuals will ultimately be left behind. These scenarios will create further distrust of government and less engagement, and we will all be left to grapple with the compounding impacts of the lack of community wellbeing.

The shifts outlined in the draft report are not options for consideration; they are vital to the wellbeing of all New Zealand citizens and will require the reframing of the public service over a number of years.

The first fundamental shift in the reframing of the New Zealand public service is that central government investment needs to be guided by questions around how any investment will contribute to equity, resilience and wellbeing. Local councils in partnership with Mana Whenua working alongside our communities are in a unique position to understand intimately where investment needs to happen at a community level to achieve equitable wellbeing and resilience outcomes across population groups. It is this point of difference that needs acknowledgement at the central level and needs to be leveraged if we are to practice local governance in a way that achieves wellbeing outcomes that matter to the communities we serve. It is this shift that underpins all the others.

Achieving higher levels of public participation, especially with those that public service has failed, can lead to better wellbeing outcomes. Local government holds the tikanga for their communities, which is the basis for building and maintaining enduring relationships that can

foster greater trust and public participation in government. This vital role in establishing local relationships cannot be conveyed by central government.

The Panel has this single opportunity to convey to central government the consequences of inaction. Ignoring the voice of local government will have significant consequences for New Zealand citizens; local government has a vital role to play in navigating our public service to new and better horizons as stewards alongside central government, hapū, iwi, and Māori.

Hutt City Council's approach to the submission is an analysis of feedback from council staff, Elected Members and Mana Whenua. Together we have agreed that system change is needed for all levels of government if we are to effect meaningful change for everyone.

Although we welcome the opportunity to provide our collective feedback on the draft report, we need to see action now. Failing to meet the long-term needs of all citizens will result in far greater costs as well as lost opportunities as a country. We need to recognise that intergenerational wellbeing is as important as current wellbeing.

Building a more sustainable system that strengthens wellbeing is vital to a resilient and inclusive new public service model. Significant change to the status quo is overdue, and our shared commitment to reform is crucial.

Pai mārire ki a tātou,



Campbell Barry, Mayor, Hutt City Council
Jo Miller, Chief Executive, Hutt City Council