

Let's Chat : 15 November

Personal thoughts and observations by Garry Jackson, Mayor, Hurunui District Council.

Hello everyone

There is no doubt the elections have dominated the news over the last week, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Colin King on his re-election as the member for Kaikoura.

I think we all know the challenges and mayor issues facing the incoming government. In amongst all those pressures and priorities is a need for Wellington to take a proactive and somewhat urgent initiative to address the costs that have been imposed centrally in recent years on local government.

As your Council, we are facing this issue to an increasing degree, as it will become very clear to the District in the forthcoming 2009-2019 Long Term Council Community Plan, presently under development.

Audit costs continue to rise; together with increasing standards that we are expected to achieve. Last Friday I attended a regional local government meeting at which both the Office of the Auditor General and the New Zealand Transport Agency indicated that councils across New Zealand were expected to "lift the bar" in reporting and long term planning standards for internal reporting to Wellington. I spoke forcefully on this whole issue, but we need a sympathetic and understanding ear from the incoming government.

The second area of our operation where this issue is hitting home is the building code and compliance. As one of the first councils in New Zealand to be certified under the new Act, we are now, twelve months on, being re-audited as part of maintaining the certification. Some areas of "fine print" within this re-audit are beyond relief, in my opinion.

The time for change, and a return to a common sense level of affordability and pragmatism is now urgent.

Sincerely

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