



27 February 2023

Te Arotake i te Anamata mō Ngā Kaunihera
Review into the Future for Local Government

By email: futureforlg@dia.govt.nz

Hurunui District Council's submission on the Interim Report for the Future for Local Government

Introduction

1. This is a submission on the Interim Report for the Future for Local Government from the Hurunui District Council (HDC).
2. The Hurunui District is located in North Canterbury. We have approximately 13700 residents and cover an area of 8,646 km² spanning from the east coast across to the Main Divide. The Hurunui District is predominately rural land interspaced with small service towns. Our economy is primarily reliant on primary production and tourism.
3. HDC thanks the Review Panel for providing an opportunity to submit on the Interim Report.

General Comments

4. Promoting decision making at local level, creating and maintaining the sense of belonging in local communities, and having the security of equitable funding is important to the Hurunui community. We support a stronger and more resilient relationship between local and central government centered on a sustainable and equitable funding model to enable the Council to support its communities' wellbeing.
5. The current plethora of central government reforms¹ of local government should be put on hold so that the work on the future for local government can be finalized. The current reforms threaten to hollow out local government to such a degree, that local government may not be left with sufficient capacity to participate in its own future.

Revitalising citizen-led democracy

6. The Council considers that it provides numerous opportunities for the community to be engaged on issues that are of interest to them and directly affect them. The Coastal Conversations project (working with communities on adaptation planning) is an example of facilitating good levels of

¹ Three Waters, Resource Management, Emergency Management Reform (Trifecta), Sale and Supply of Alcohol, Local Government Electoral Legislation, Local Government Official information and Meetings Amendment,

engagement. It is effective because it is designed by and for the community. Engagement rather than mandated consultation is considered more effective in encouraging citizen participation.

7. Long Term Plan, Annual Plan and other processes requiring the Special Consultative Procedure such as Bylaws development or review, often result in lower levels of engagement because of lack of understanding or concern about how the subject directly affects them. Some community consultation processes are overly onerous. For example, the Review of Reserve Management Plan requires two rounds of public consultation and eight-week notification period.
8. The Council suggests that there is compulsory Civics' education for rangatahi to encourage participation.

Tiriti-based partnership between Māori and local government

9. The Council considers that there is a lack of understanding of the principles of co-governance and supports central government providing funding to build both Māori and council capability and capacity to develop a partnership relationship.
10. The Council considers that the development of shared priorities with Māori, Regional Council and local government within the takiwa is important for establishing a common framework.

Allocating roles and functions in a way that enhances wellbeing

11. In allocating roles and functions the Council is of the view that to have a meaningful impact on wellbeing it needs control over the delivery of the service and the funding to support the delivery of the service. The service needs should be determined locally, and priorities might be different for different communities.
12. Council agrees that allocations of roles and functions is not a binary decision between delivered centrally or locally and has successfully worked with central government to deliver wellbeing programmes. The Council has recently appointed a Welcoming Communities Facilitator to bring together communities to make them welcoming for everyone. This is a central government funded programme providing knowledge sharing, plans, funding and celebration of success being delivered locally.
13. The Council is working with five small coastal communities on adaptation plans to deal with a changing climate, however the ability for the Council to support coastal communities to adapt and retreat is financially challenging. The Council welcomes the opportunity to take a lead role in enhancing the community's wellbeing, but it needs policy and funding to be able to support to community led initiatives.
14. Processes need to be created that prioritise community outcomes, for the allocation of roles and responsibilities. A framework needs to be developed to enable the allocation of roles and functions in partnership with Māori.
15. Clearer roles and responsibilities will enable on the ground action to happen faster.

Local government as champion and activator of wellbeing

16. Wellbeing needs to be considered in its broadest sense including cultural, economic, environmental, and social wellbeing. Support needs to be provided to councils to develop sustainable partnerships with hapu/iwi and Māori organisations.. Working together with Māori on projects or joint initiatives helps build trust and understanding and the confidence to work together to achieve good outcomes.
17. Councils are best placed to deliver services locally as they have grass roots understanding of the needs and the ability to enable creative solutions for service delivery. There are already organisations embedded in the community such as Rural Support, Wellbeing North Canterbury, Presbyterian Support that HDC is connected with to champion and support wellbeing.
18. Councils are also well-placed to identify gaps in service provision and to work with community leaders, funders and service providers to address these e.g Together Hurunui is a non-statutory network of social services operating in the Hurunui District that includes community groups, schools and health centres, NGO agencies, local council and central government representatives. The network identifies gaps in social service provision in Hurunui and supports projects, services and initiatives to meet these needs.
19. Other successful initiatives developed and run locally and supported by central government are the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs, Welcoming Communities and Youth Development. The Driver Education Programme which supports rangatahi to get drivers licenses, recognises there are barriers in rural areas such as distance to driver education and testing programmes. Being able to drive is essential to obtain and maintain employment in rural areas. While Council is appreciative of these funding opportunities, more could be achieved if funding provision was aligned with the community development process, whereby community members are supported to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them, creating stronger and more connected communities. For instance, following the Waiau-Kaikoura earthquakes in 2016, community-led process was undertaken resulting in several projects in Waiau that utilised a range of funding options, to support and enable a successful outcome.

A stronger relationship between central and local government

20. A stronger relationship is desirable. Districts across the motu are different and bespoke programmes built from the ground up are the most successful. Mayors Taskforce for Jobs is an example of a successful locally led and delivered programme funded by Central Government.
21. The Council's iwi relationship is strained because of the Council's position on Three Waters reform. Different resourcing requirements for runanga to engage with local government needs to be acknowledged. The Council acknowledges the primacy of Te Tiriti and also supports a multicultural focus to issues that represents community.
22. The Council believes that local government is best placed to manage climate change adaptation planning but it requires central government funding and policy direction to support the implementation of adaptation plans developed locally.
23. Council is interested in a greater role in developing community housing. Kainga Ora has housing stock in the District, which could be managed by local government including building maintenance and pastoral care of the residents. Local government already has the experience of managing social housing. Hurunui has 34 social housing units and four residential housing units.

Replenishing and building on representative democracy

24. The Council supports adopting the single Transferrable Vote as the voting method for local elections, doesn't support lowering the voting age to 16 years and does support a four year election term. While recognizing potential efficiencies in running central and local government elections at the same time, the Council considers central and local government elections should be in separate years to avoid the over politicisation of local government elections.
25. Diversity of representation is impacted by the level of income for Councillors. In smaller Districts such as ours, the Councillor remuneration doesn't equate to the living wage and is largely a volunteer role. Most of the current Councillors have external businesses or employment that supplement their income but these need to be able to fit in around Council business. The workload, timing of meetings and remuneration is also reflected in the under representation of young people on Council. This limits the diversity of candidates able to stand for Council.

Equitable funding and finance

26. Council agrees that the Regulatory Impact Statement Assessments must include the impacts on local government. Unfunded mandates such as alcohol regulation has financially impacted the individual ratepayer and not recognised the public good benefits from such regulation.
27. Agreement needs to be reached on the co-investment arrangements to meet all the factors for community wellbeing including core infrastructure, Roothing, Three Waters, Waste and Amenities and community facilities.
28. Council supports an intergenerational fund for climate change adaptation but is concerned about the process to apply for funding and ensuring all affected communities have a chance at applying for support. Small rural communities are often disadvantaged in central government funding opportunities because of the cost and complexity of funding application requirements.
29. The Council supports changes to legislation to enable councils to introduce new funding mechanisms and that central government should pay rates and charges on its all its properties. The Council considers the Waka Kotahi funding allocation model for roading could be a starting point, provided it is fair and consistent across all councils.
30. It is important that centralised funding models and the rationalisation of services maintains local governance and priority setting.
31. Council supports a simplified Long Term Planning process that is more relatable to community development planning and achieving agreed community outcomes. This may improve engagement in the Long Term Plan development process.

System stewardship and support

32. The Council supports that constituting documents for Local Government are enduring and not subject to political change. An example is the change of the purpose of local government including the four wellbeings. The removal and then reinstatement of the four wellbeings had implications for long term planning.

33. We support the establishment of an Independent Panel. This could be an expanded Local Government Commission that mediates /arbitrates between central government and local government, is trusted by both parties, has members appointed by agreement of all parties and is for a five-year term.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie A Black." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marie Black
Mayor (on behalf of Hurunui District Council)