



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Media Release

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West Coast Regional Council position on Local Government Reform recommendations

The West Coast Regional Council (the Council) acknowledges the work undertaken by the Review Panel over the past two years resulting in the final 17 recommendations for Local Government Review. These recommendations, which are practical and logical but bold, will challenge both central and local government in their implementation.

Presenting the recommendations as an integrated suite, which cannot be “cherry picked”, would ensure consistency across the local government sector, but are likely to present challenges in their implementation for some regions.

A strong partnership between central government and local government will be required to move forward on the recommendations presented. The future of local government must be locally led and centrally supported with decision making occurring within the region.

Local government across the West Coast is already cooperating and sharing services that are resulting in cost efficiencies and better service delivery. These services include development of Te Tai o Poutini Plan (the combined district plan for the West Coast), roading contracts and civil defence emergency management. Significant opportunities exist to continue shared service arrangements to pave the way and establish the fundamental building blocks for local government reform across the region.

The Resource Management Act reform, Three Waters reform and significant investment in West Coast public infrastructure is reason enough for a rethink of the structure of West Coast local government.

All Councils on the West Coast are currently facing recruitment challenges, are competing with one another and at times ‘poaching’ each other’s staff. Reform will give greater capability and critical mass. Amalgamation is required to share and capitalise on the resourcing available. Local government on the West Coast cannot continue to work in silos.

The West Coast community and existing Councils should be empowered to decide how they want the future of local government to look on the West Coast. The future should not be left to the dictates of central government, imposed from Wellington.

The future of local government reform on the West Coast must be a feature of the next local government election in October 2025, and undertaken in partnership with Poutini Ngāi Tahu. Any reform options must clearly articulate the benefits for West Coast communities with lower rates and / or better service delivery. These key benefits must be clearly demonstrated.

Council would like to strongly endorse the 5 recommendations for increasing funding, particularly that central government pay rates on Crown property. Council believes that this recommendation should be extended further to include the payment of rates on Conservation land, noting that a number of the issues that Council must manage originate from the Conservation Estate.

Implementing this funding model change in particular would recognise the funding issues experienced by those areas with constrained rating bases and provide real change for local government to undertake its core business for the ongoing well-being of the community without having to continue increasing rates on its small population.

We look forward to seeing these recommendations implemented in due course.

ENDS

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