

11.5 SUBMISSION ON SIMPLIFYING LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL

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Pouwhakahaere Whakamahere Kaupapahere me ngā Ratonga

WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government has released Simplifying Local Government, a draft proposal signalling significant change to the system of local government. The process outlined aims to create local proposals for reorganisation to achieve simpler, clearer and more cost-effective governance and service delivery. It includes the removal of regional councillors and their replacement with a Combined Territories Board of mayors responsible for developing a reorganisation plan. The Government is seeking feedback on the draft proposal.

KAUPAPA

PURPOSE

This report outlines the key elements of the proposed local government system reform, the primary issues on which the Council may wish to provide feedback, and a draft submission for Council's consideration and approval.

NGĀ TŪTOHUTANGA

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council | Te Kaunihera o Porirua:

1. Receive the report.
2. Agree to approve the Council's submission on the Simplifying Local Government Draft Proposal and the Council's responses to the survey on the Simplifying Local Government Draft Proposal.

Reports contain recommendations only. Refer to the meeting minutes for the final decision.

HE WHAKAMĀRAMA

BACKGROUND

1. The Government has released *Simplifying Local Government* (SLG) a draft proposal signalling significant change to the system of local government. The process outlined aims to create local proposals for reorganisation and realignment to achieve simpler, clearer and more cost-effective service delivery. The Government is seeking feedback from councils on the draft proposal.
2. SLG proposes removing regional councillors and replacing them with a Combined Territories Board (CTB), a mayoral group drawn from all of the constituent local councils. It includes the option of adding a Crown Commissioner.
3. The CTB would:
 - a. Take over all the roles and functions of the Regional Council; and

- b. Develop a regional reorganisation plan, within two years, detailing how the councils can work together to deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

Combined Territories Board (CTB)

4. For the Wellington region a CTB would include mayors from eight Territorial Authorities (TAs) (Porirua, Masterton, Carterton, South Wairarapa, Kāpiti, Upper Hutt, Hutt City, and Wellington). There is no provision for Iwi/Māori representation on CTBs.
5. Although the Government's preferred option is a mayor only CTB, the proposal also presents a number of options for including a Crown Commissioner - either as an observer, with veto power to override CTB decisions, with a majority vote, or instead of mayors. In some cases, other government agencies may participate in CTB decision-making, as happens currently for regional land transport planning, where NZTA participates to make sure local, regional and national interests are balanced.
6. Voting powers for mayors on a CTB would be determined by the Local Government Commission (LGC), balancing population size, effective representation and urban/rural interests.
7. For some resource management decisions, the Government proposes a dual condition voting procedure. A resolution would only pass if CTB members representing 50% of the population support the resolution, and more than 50% of CTB members with a voting mandate support the resolution.
8. CTBs would be required to lead development of a Regional Reorganisation Plan, and depending on the plan agreed, CTBs could remain in place, be dissolved or repurposed.

Regional Reorganisation Plan (RRP)

9. The purpose of an RRP is to:
 - a. Encourage all councils to work together to reduce duplication and improve efficiency.
 - b. Keep local voice and identity where it matters most.
 - c. Ensure services are delivered in a way that fits the region's needs; and
 - d. Provide a structured, transparent process for reform.
10. Plans would be required to: map all of the current functions of councils in the region; assess how well they are working together and opportunities to improve; set out options for future delivery (considering shared services, joint council controlled organisations, unitary councils, and new ways for community input); consider cost impacts, service quality and local representation; work with post-settlement governance entities regarding Treaty settlement arrangements; and set out a financial and organisational transition plan.
11. Following public consultation, the RRP would be submitted to the LGC to assess against a set of statutory criteria and make a recommendation to the Minister of Local Government about whether it strikes a suitable balance between criteria. Final approval of an RRP would sit with the Minister of Local Government. No community referendum is included in the process, as these are considered costly, slow and unrepresentative, given low voter turnout.
12. The proposed set of statutory criteria for assessing the suitability of an RRP are:
 - a. Big picture fit – supporting national priorities, strategies and goals
 - b. Affordable now and in the future – financially responsible management
 - c. Better services – local services that work better and cost less
 - d. Clear leadership – clarity about who does what
 - e. Local say – decisions at the right level; fair and effective representation

- f. Treaty arrangements – how Treaty settlement commitments/other agreements with iwi/Māori will be given effect to/improved
 - g. Can it be done – realistic plan to put into action
13. The Government has also signalled that it is undertaking a rapid review of the current functions of regional councils to identify those that can be ceased or returned to central government. This is expected to inform the development of RPs and be made public mid-year.

Treaty of Waitangi and Māori presentation

14. Under the proposed reforms, all of the roles, functions and obligations of regional councils would be inherited by CTBs. This would explicitly include provision for carrying over Treaty settlements that place an obligation on a regional council.
15. Existing arrangements for Māori engagement and participation would continue including appointment to council committees and joint committees, and involvement in joint entities established under Treaty settlements. CTBs would be required to comply with all existing provisions of the Local Government Act 2002 as they relate to Māori.
16. Māori regional council constituencies would be abolished, as there would be no regional elected members.

NGĀ MATAPAKI ME NGĀ KŌWHIRINGA **DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS**

Introduction

17. The Government's push for greater efficiencies in local government is unfolding against a backdrop of wider reforms. These include the consolidation of water service delivery into new regional entities, and the Resource Management reforms currently before Parliament. The latter reforms introduce significantly greater prescription, and mandate much higher levels of consistency in consenting and planning processes across neighbouring councils. Alongside the proposed introduction of rates-capping requirements, the programme of reforms signal a clear direction from central government: reduce duplication, streamline decision-making, and ensure councils operate within tighter financial, regulatory, and service-delivery parameters.
18. Prior to release of the SLG Draft Proposal, the Council had already recognised the need to explore more efficient and effective regional governance and service delivery options.
19. At the 2025 local government election, a non-binding referendum indicated that fifty-six percent of voters supported Porirua City working with other councils in the region to explore the possibility of creating a single council, combining relevant services and functions regionally, while keeping appropriate local services and decision making local.
20. The Council, with its regional partners (other territorial authorities, the regional council and iwi) has been keen to work with Government to explore and develop an enduring solution for regional governance that serves Porirua City and the Wellington region well for future generations.

Key issues

21. While the Government's goal of making local government more efficient, effective and affordable is consistent with the Council's desire to explore regional governance and service delivery reform, there are significant issues with the Government's wider reform programme and the approach outlined in SLG. These issues are discussed below and reflected in the draft submission (see Attachment 1).

Impact of the Government's wider local government reform programme

22. The Government's wider programme of reform (including SLG) is having a direct and destabilising impact on the current and future operating model of local government that will impact its ability to support social wellbeing, protect the environment and help enable economic growth. Multiple reforms are poorly aligned, originating from different parts of Government, with different policy intents and accountabilities.
23. This piecemeal approach also risks compromising the Government's own policy objectives, particularly those relating to growth. As a pro-growth council, strengthening councils' ability to respond to growth pressures is necessarily an important yardstick for policy effectiveness, and many of the proposed reforms are likely to constrain growth in Porirua, rather than support it.
24. The reforms also significantly impact on the nature of democratic accountability that the community currently enjoys. Ultimately, the council is answerable to the community, and many of the proposed reforms shift power away from the local community.

Simplifying Local Government draft proposal

25. The SLG draft proposal is poorly conceived, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the role and functions of local government, failing to acknowledge the democratic mandate of local government, and demonstrating a fundamental lack of respect for community voice. It also risks further undermining communities trust in local government, by limiting local voice in reform processes.
26. The draft proposal lacks a clear and robust problem definition and imposes a top-down process that is inconsistent with a commitment to localism. It is also contrary to strengthening partnerships between local government and mana whenua/Māori.

Combined Territories Board membership

27. Replacing recently elected regional councillors with CTBs would cut across the democratically expressed preferences of voters in the 2025 local government election. It would remove the set of elected members who have the express democratic mandate to represent regional-scale interests, and who are best placed to contribute regional-scale perspectives to any local government reform process.
28. If established, the draft proposal indicates that CTBs could include a Crown Commissioner as a member, either with no voting power, with veto power, with a majority vote, or that they could replace regional councillors rather than mayors. None of these options are consistent with a commitment to local democratic accountability and are therefore undesirable. Mayors are directly elected by their communities and are therefore best positioned to represent the communities across their region, if CTBs are put in place.
29. Regional councils oversee a wide range of complex functions critical to the success of regional economies and communities, and the governance workload for regional councillors is significant. The removal of regional councillors, with regional governance experience, and appointment of mayors to CTBs is likely to create significant new, and potentially unsustainable, workloads for mayors (and any other councillors appointed to committees of the CTB).
30. Mayors and local councillors have been elected to represent local communities and make local decisions in their cities and districts. Their appointment to CTBs will require a fundamental shift in their focus from local to regional. This is likely to impact on the attention and focus they can give to local issues, and the concerns of local residents and local ratepayers.

Allocating CTB voting power

31. Mayoral voting powers on a CTB are proposed to be proportional, adjusted by the Local Government Commission (LGC) balancing population size, effective representation and urban/rural interests. The draft proposal indicates the LGC would do this in two ways:

- a. By balancing democratic legitimacy (the one person one vote principle), effective representation (allowing distinct communities to contribute to decision-making) and effective governance (promoting sound decision-making); and
 - b. Providing for dual condition voting for some resource management decisions, where a resolution would only pass if CTB members representing more than 50% of the population and more than 50% of CTB members with a voting mandate support the resolution.
32. While the proposal to balance population size and effective representation is a sound basis for establishing voting proportionality, the inclusion of dual condition voting arrangements for some resource management decisions is problematic.
33. Including dual condition voting arrangements is contrary to the principle of “one person, one vote”, and gives the voices of some residents in a region (residents in smaller, rural councils) greater weight to determine critical resource management decisions than other residents (residents in larger urban areas). This issue would be of greatest concern for Porirua City with respect to decisions relating to the restoration, protection and management of Te Awarua o Porirua harbour and its catchments.

Regional Reorganisation Plan process and criteria

34. There is merit in having a consistent national approach for defining and implementing new governance arrangements for a region, using a process such as the proposed regional reorganisation plans (RRP). The process allows a wide range of governance and service delivery options to be explored and evaluated for their suitability. But the requirement that they be developed by a CTB would not be an optimal approach for Porirua City or the Wellington region, and the criteria against which RRP would be assessed are too narrow.
35. Instead of being CTB-led, the process for preparing an RRP would be more effective if undertaken by existing regional partners working together (regional council, city and district councils and iwi) with the Government, and including strong public and stakeholder consultation, and timelines appropriate for developing and implementing an enduring solution. It's likely that in the Wellington region, an RRP could be prepared more quickly than the timeline outlined in the draft proposal, if existing regional partners (including the regional council) undertook the work together.
36. While most of the criteria outlined in the draft proposal to guide assessment of RRP by the LGC and the Minister of Local Government are broadly appropriate, a number of amendments and additional criteria are needed to strengthen references to partnership with mana whenua and Māori, and to ensure a focus on environmental and community wellbeing. Specifically:
- a. the criteria relating to Treaty settlement arrangements needs to be broadened to require an RRP to actively support partnership between local government and mana whenua and Māori.
 - b. a criterion needs to be added that requires the RRP to support environmental protection of the region's natural resources, and
 - c. a criterion needs to be added that requires the RRP to support the wellbeing of people and communities across the region.

Funding the reform process

37. There are likely to be significant costs associated with preparing an RRP and transitioning to any new local government arrangements.
38. Placing a cap on council rates will make it much more difficult to fund and manage any transition. Implementation of a rates cap should be deferred until after local government system reform has been completed, so that funding constraints do not constrain and slow down the ability of councils to design and implement the most efficient and effective local government system for their region.

Role of the Local Government Commission

- 39. The proposed approach envisages a significant increase in the role and workload of the LGC, including:
 - a. Providing ongoing advice to councils and CTBs;
 - b. Designing the voting allocation process for CTBs for each region;
 - c. Reviewing draft RRP's and providing feedback to CTBs; and
 - d. Advising the Minister on RRP alignment with statutory criteria.
- 40. Significant additional resourcing for the LGC will be needed, to ensure that it can play its role in the proposed reform process in a proactive, timely and constructive manner.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori representation

- 41. The proposal does not adequately provide for iwi/Māori interests.
- 42. While the draft proposal states that it is designed to not undermine, disrupt, or affect Treaty settlements, and allows for existing arrangements for Māori engagement and participation to continue, it fails to adequately acknowledge and support the enduring and evolving partnership between local government and mana whenua/Māori.
- 43. The loss of Māori constituencies on regional councils is significant, and the lack of any proposal to provide for formal Māori representation on CTBs is a step backward, and contrary to local government's commitment to partner with mana whenua/Māori.
- 44. The positive opportunity in reform of local government is to put in place arrangements that support an inclusive, diverse community based on Te Tiriti. This involves developing (in partnership) a modern democratic governance system for local government that provides for Te Tiriti partnership with mana whenua in a tangible and respectful way.

An alternative approach for the Wellington region

- 45. The Council and its regional partners are exploring the opportunity to pursue an alternative approach to local government reform in the Wellington region. Rather than establish a CTB, regional partners wish to move directly to develop a reorganisation plan with the existing regional councillors remaining in place to contribute to reform design and provide regionally focused representation and perspectives.
- 46. A report recommending Porirua City Council join a regional working group on future regional governance options is on the 19 February 2026 Council Agenda. On 5 February 2026, Wellington City Council unanimously agreed to join the proposed regional working group, and other councils in region are expected to decide whether to join by the end of February.

Providing council's feedback on the SLG draft proposal

- 47. The Government has requested feedback from councils on the SLG draft proposal, using a 10-question survey, with the option to also attach a formal submission. It has noted that responses will be analysed using AI.
- 48. Some survey questions ask for responses on a Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree scale. Recommended responses to these survey questions are summarised in the following table for council's consideration and approval. (See questions in italics).
- 49. Other questions provide text boxes for comments. These are addressed in the formal submission, that is attached for council's consideration and approval.

Survey question	Recommended response
<i>Do you agree there is a need to simplify local government?</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>

What do you think of the proposed approach overall?	Address in formal submission
<i>Do you agree with replacing regional councillors with a CTB?</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
What do you like or dislike about the proposal to replace regional councillors with a CTB?	Address in formal submission
<i>What level of Crown participation in regional decision-making do you prefer?</i>	<i>None – only mayors on the CTB</i>
<i>Do you agree that mayors on the CTB should have a proportional vote adjusted for effective representation?</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
What do you like or dislike about the voting proposal for the CTB?	Address in formal submission
<i>Do you support the proposal to require CTBs to develop regional reorganisation plans?</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
What do you think about the criteria proposed for assessing regional reorganisation plans?	Address in formal submission
What do you think about how the proposal provides for iwi/Māori interests and Treaty arrangements?	Address in formal submission

KŌRERO WHAKAKAPI

CONCLUSION

50. The Government’s programme of local government reform signals a clear direction: reduce duplication, streamline decision-making, and ensure councils operate within tighter financial, regulatory, and service-delivery parameters.
51. While the Government’s interest in exploring local government system reform is welcome, the proposed approach outlined in the Simplifying Local Government draft proposal is not considered to be fit for purpose.
52. The draft proposal is poorly conceived and lacks a robust problem definition. It demonstrates a lack of understanding of the role and functions of local government. The proposal to remove regional councillors fails to acknowledge the democratic mandate of local government and demonstrates a fundamental lack of respect for community voice. Its criteria for assessing Regional Reorganisation Plans are too narrowly drawn and do not pay enough attention to wider community and environmental wellbeing.
53. Critically it is also contrary to strengthening partnership between local government and mana whenua and works against putting in place arrangements that support an inclusive, diverse community based on Te Tiriti.
54. The recommended responses to the SLG survey questions and the draft submission for the Council’s consideration and approval reflect this assessment of the SLG draft proposal.

NGĀ MŌHIOHIO TAUTOKO SUPPORTING INFORMATION

E TINO WHAI WĀHI ANA KI TE AHUNGA RAUTAKI A TE KAUNIHERA CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The issues discussed in this report contribute to all of the strategic priorities of the city, as the Simplifying Local Government draft proposal relates to long-term reform of the local government system.

NGĀ WHIRIWHIRINGA Ā-PŪTEA FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Approving the Council's submission to Simplifying Local Government has no financial implications.

NGĀ WHAKARITENGA Ā-TURE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

There are no legal implications or statutory requirements.

TE WHAKAMANA I NGĀ MĀTĀPONO O TE TIRITI RECOGNITION OF TREATY PRINCIPLES

The proposed submission supports greater recognition of Te Tiriti in any local government system reform and strengthening of the Council's partnership with mana whenua and Māori.

HIRANGA SIGNIFICANCE

The decision in this report is rated as being of low significance in accordance with the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

TE KŌRERORERO TAHI ME NGĀ WHAKAWHITIWHITI KŌRERO ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

No specific communication plan is proposed for the decision in this report.

A communication and engagement plan are a key component of the proposed regional joint working group on future governance options, to ensure that the public and ratepayers across the region are informed and engaged in the discussion on local government reform, amalgamation and service delivery options.

NGĀ ĀPITIHINGA ATTACHMENTS

1. **Draft submission on the Simplifying Local Government proposal**

Department of Internal Affairs
WELLINGTON

20 February 2026

Submission on Simplifying Local Government – A draft proposal

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Simplifying Local Government – A draft proposal.

Government's wider reform programme

The Government's reform programme is having a direct impact on the current and future operating model of local government. This includes the Simplifying Local Government draft proposal, the proposed rates target model, resource management reform, emergency management reform, water reform and building consent reform. Porirua City finds itself reacting to multiple, poorly aligned policy changes derived from different parts of Government, with different intents and accountabilities.

While it is clear to us that system change needs to occur within local government, this piecemeal approach runs the risk of compromising a number of Government objectives. First and foremost among these is growth. As a pro-growth Council, we use our ability to respond to growth pressures as an important yardstick for policy effectiveness, and we think that many of the proposed reforms will constrain growth in our city.

The programme of reforms also significantly impacts on the nature of democratic accountability that our community currently enjoys. Ultimately, we are answerable to our community, and many of the proposed reforms shift power away from the local community.

Starting a conversation about local government system reform

Porirua City welcomes the opportunity to explore reform of the local government system, in partnership with the Government and work with our community to define and achieve the best outcomes for Porirua City and the wider Wellington region.

Our community has indicated that they are ready to start this reform conversation, illustrated by the result of a non-binding referendum held at the time of the 2025 local government election. Fifty-six percent of our voters supported Porirua City working with other councils in the region to explore the possibility of creating a single council,

combining relevant services and functions regionally, while keeping appropriate local services and decision making local.

With our regional partners (councils and iwi) and the Government we want to explore this opportunity and develop an enduring solution that will serve Porirua City and the Wellington region well for future generations. Any process for exploring reform or proposed new local government arrangements will need to ensure a strong community voice, align with our commitment to partner with mana whenua and Māori, provide clarity about what decisions are best made locally rather than regionally, and recognise that the functions of regional councils remain critically important for the wellbeing of our communities and the environment.

Simplifying Local Government draft proposal

Porirua City strongly disagrees with the proposed overall approach for simplifying local government.

We believe the draft proposal is poorly conceived, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the role and functions of local government, fails to acknowledge the democratic mandate of local government, and demonstrates a fundamental lack of respect for community voice.

The draft proposal lacks a clear and robust problem definition. It would impose a top-down process that is inconsistent with a commitment to localism. It would also be contrary to strengthening partnerships between local government and mana whenua and Māori. The draft proposal cuts across the recent, democratically expressed preferences of voters in the 2025 local government election, by decapitating regional councils. It risks further undermining communities trust in local government.

This proposal is one of a number of ad-hoc, poorly aligned reforms the Government is making to the role, functions, structure and funding of local government. It is offering no accompanying overall, integrated vision for the future of local government. Currently, the suite of changes that are in-train and proposed lacks coherence and risks fundamentally destabilising local government, which will in turn impact its ability to help enable economic growth, support social wellbeing, and protect the environment.

While we support the Government's goals of making local government more efficient, effective and affordable for our communities, Porirua City (with our regional partners) wishes to pursue an alternative approach with a shorter timeline, that leverages the Government's willingness to engage in local government reform. We would welcome the Government's support and partnership in this work, which may include bespoke

legislative provisions to enable the Wellington region to achieve its local government reform goals.

Feedback on specific elements of the draft proposal

Combined Territorial Board

Porirua City Council strongly disagrees with replacing regional councillors with a Combined Territories Board (CTB), to take over all roles and functions of regional councils. Regional councillors should remain in place until any new local government arrangements have been implemented.

Removing recently elected regional councillors would cut across the democratically expressed preferences of voters in the 2025 local government election. It would remove the set of elected members who have the express democratic mandate to represent regional-scale interests, and who are best placed to contribute regional-scale perspectives to any local government reform process.

Porirua City does not support Crown participation in the regional decision making of a CTB.

If CTBs are established, membership should include only the mayors of the territorial authorities of a given region, as mayors have been directly elected by their communities and are best positioned to represent the communities across their region.

Regional councils oversee a wide range of complex functions critical to the success of regional economies and communities. The governance workload for regional councillors is significant. We are very concerned that the removal of regional councillors, with regional governance experience, and the establishment of CTBs will create unsustainable workloads for mayors (and potentially other councillors appointed to committees of the CTB).

Mayors and local councillors have been elected to represent local communities and make local decisions in their cities and districts. Their appointment to CTBs will require a fundamental shift in their focus from the local to the regional, and this is likely to impact on the attention and focus they can give to local issues, and the concerns of local residents and local ratepayers.

Allocating voting power

Porirua City agrees that mayors on the CTB should have a proportional vote adjusted for effective representation. This allocation of voting power should apply to all decisions, including all resource management decisions.

We do not support the proposed dual condition voting arrangements for some resource management decisions, where a resolution would only pass if CTB members representing more than 50% of the population and more than 50% of CTB members with a voting mandate, support the resolution.

The dual condition voting arrangements are contrary to the principle of “one person, one vote”, and give the voices of some residents in a region (residents in smaller, rural councils) greater weight to determine critical resource management decisions than other residents (residents in larger urban areas). This issue is of greatest concern for Porirua City with respect to decisions relating to the restoration, protection and management of Te Awarua o Porirua harbour and its catchments.

Porirua City supports the inclusion of objectives for the Local Government Commission to consider when balancing effective representation with population size. Specific legal objectives and criteria should be provided to guide its decisions. We support the draft objectives of democratic legitimacy, effective representation and effective governance, and the requirement that the Commission would have to find the best possible balance between these objectives when allocating votes between the mayors on the CTB.

Regional Reorganisation Plans

Porirua City supports the proposal to develop regional reorganisation plans (RRP), as a way of defining and achieving new governance arrangements for a region. We strongly disagree that CTBs should lead this process.

RRPs should be prepared by existing regional partners working together (regional council, city and district councils and iwi), with strong public and stakeholder consultation built into the process and timelines that allow the time needed to develop and implement an enduring solution. For the Wellington region we believe an RRP can be prepared more quickly than the timeline outlined in the draft proposal, if existing regional partners undertake this work together.

While we support most of the criteria outlined in the draft proposal to guide assessment of RRP by the Local Government Commission and the Minister of Local Government, we believe a number of amendments and additional criteria are required to strengthen references to partnership with mana whenua and Māori, and to ensure a focus on environmental and community wellbeing. Specifically:

- the criteria relating to Treaty arrangements needs to be expanded, to require an RRP actively support partnership between local government and mana whenua and Māori.

- a criteria needs to be added that requires the RRP to support environmental protection of the region's natural resources, and
- a criteria needs to be added that requires the RRP to support the wellbeing of the people and communities of the region.

Porirua City believes that the roles and functions of regional councils are critically important for the wellbeing of our communities and the environment. We have significant concerns that the Government's review of regional councils' roles and functions is being undertaken without engagement with territorial authorities, regional councils and iwi partners.

Funding the reform process

While some of the key drivers of local government reform are to help make local government more efficient, affordable and financially sustainable, there will be significant costs associated with preparing an RRP and transitioning to any new local government arrangements.

Placing a cap on council rates will make it much more difficult to fund and manage the transition to a simpler, more effective and efficient local government system. Implementation of a rates cap should be deferred until after local government system reform has been completed, so that funding constraints do not constrain and slow down the ability of councils to design and implement the most efficient and effective local government system for their region.

Role of the Local Government Commission

The proposed overall approach envisages a significant increase in the workload of the Local Government Commission, including providing ongoing advice to councils and CTBs, designing the voting allocation process for CTBs for each region, reviewing draft RRP, and advising the Minister on RRP alignment with statutory criteria.

Porirua City requests that the Government provide significant additional resourcing for the Commission, so that it can play its role in the proposed reform process in a proactive, timely and constructive manner.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori Representation

Porirua City believes that the proposal does not adequately provide for iwi/Māori interests.

While acknowledging that the proposal is designed to not undermine, disrupt, or affect Treaty settlements, and allows for existing arrangements for Māori engagement and participation to continue, the draft proposal fails to adequately acknowledge and

support the enduring and evolving partnership between local government and mana whenua and Māori.

The loss of Māori constituencies on regional councils is significant, and the lack of any proposal to provide for formal Māori representation on CTBs is a step backward, and contrary to local government's commitment to partner with mana whenua and Māori. We note that communities in the Wellington region voted strongly in favour of retaining Māori wards at the 2025 local government election, with 69% voting in favour in Porirua City.

Porirua City values an inclusive, diverse community based on Te Tiriti. We believe the focus should be on developing (in partnership) a modern democratic governance system for local government that provides for Te Tiriti partnership with mana whenua in a tangible and respectful way.

An alternative approach for the Wellington region

Porirua City and its regional partners wish to pursue an alternative approach for local government reform in the Wellington region. Rather than establish a Combined Territorial Board, we wish to move directly to develop a reorganisation plan with the existing regional councillors remaining in place to contribute to reform design and provide regionally focused representation and perspectives.

We would welcome the Government's support and partnership in this work, which we believe can be done quicker than the timeline outlined in the proposed approach.

With our partners, we are intending to establish and resource a regional project to undertake this work, building on the public support expressed in the Porirua City and Hutt City referenda, to explore governance options with other councils.

Concluding comments

Porirua City does not believe the proposed overall approach in the draft proposal is fit for purpose.

We are committed to working with our regional partners to consider local government reform in our region, in line with the mandate we have received from our community. That mandate is to explore the possibility of creating a single council, combining relevant services and functions regionally, while keeping appropriate local services and decision making local.

We would welcome the Government's support and partnership in undertaking this work.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission.

Anita Baker
Mayor
Porirua City

DRAFT