

By email

9 August 2026

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Kia ora Koutou,

Local Government Reform in Te Upoko o Te Ika – Wellington Capital Region

Having been part of The Wellington Mayoral Forum deliberations over local government reform for the Wellington Region over recent months, it is our observation that the most tenable and future-proof option for the Lower North Island is a single unitary authority for the entire Wellington Region, including community councils if the government remains committed to disestablishing regional councils.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council was not invited to participate in the development of these proposals but have nevertheless been actively involved in deliberations by the Wellington Mayoral Forum along with Iwi from across the region.

I note that the two proposals for reform for the Wellington Region (with Upper Hutt and Kapiti holding a different position), have been hurriedly prepared under extremely compressed timeframes, with limited opportunity for robust analysis or meaningful community engagement. As a result, the proposals do not fully reflect the scale, complexity, or consequences of reform. We are hopeful that an opportunity for rectification of these limitations will be provided in the next phase.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council agrees with the model developed through the Mayoral Forum over the past three months (Attachment A) as a best option under the circumstances. This model provides strong regional coordination and management at scale, while delivering local voice for matters best managed locally, consistent with the principle of subsidiarity. A full set of the Regional Council's recommendations is attached as Recommendation B.

Due to warranted unawareness, in our view some territorial authorities significantly underestimate the functions of regional councils that they would need to fund and manage as small sized unitary authorities.

These functions are large, complex, and interdependent. Environmental management, flood control, regional transport, regional parks management, pest management and harbourmaster responsibilities require region-wide coordination. Any fragmentation especially around catchment management will create significant risk for the region, users and the country, particularly in the event of a significant shock.

Greater Wellington Regional Council supports reform and recognises that the current funding system is fundamentally broken. Any credible model must be grounded in rigorous economic analysis, with clear decisions on asset ownership, particularly major regional assets.

We ask that Greater Wellington Regional Council has the opportunity to contribute our regional function governance understanding and expertise by being involved and included in the co-design of the model for local government reform in the Wellington Capital Region alongside Territorial Authorities and Iwi.

We request that Strategic public assets - such as regional parks, Centreport shareholding and Metlink assets are protected from sale in the reform process.

We also ask that the government provide assurance that Treaty settlement provisions will be upheld and that a minimum effect of current Council-Iwi relationship instruments are carried forward to the new model.

We believe that there should be active community engagement by Government on proposals for reform, with a regional referendum on any final proposal advanced by the Government should be conducted.

We look forward to continuing this discussion after the election with all political parties with a view to work together to develop an improved, enduring and effective local government model for the Wellington region.

Nga mihi,



Daran Ponter

Chair

Greater Wellington Regional Council

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Copy:

Iwi Chairs and Chief Executive Officers.

Council Chairs, Mayors and Chief Executive Officers.

Enclosed:

Attachment A: Model developed through the Mayoral Forum over the past three months.

Attachment B: A full set of the Regional Council's recommendations.