



LGNZ four-monthly report for member councils

// November 2024 – February 2025





Ko Tātou LGNZ.

This report summarises LGNZ’s work on behalf of member councils and is produced three times a year. It’s structured around LGNZ’s purpose: to serve local government by **championing**, **connecting** and **supporting** members.

Please consider putting this report on the agenda for your next council meeting so that all councillors can review it and provide feedback. Sam, Susan or other National Council members are very happy to join council meetings online to discuss the report or any aspect of it – just let us know.

This report complements our regular communication channels, including *Keeping it Local* (our fortnightly e-newsletter), providing a more in-depth look at what we do.

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Introduction

This four-monthly report covers the summer holiday period when you hopefully had a well-deserved break. LGNZ continued to work hard on your behalf, delivering two All-of-local government events, meeting with Ministers, making submissions and producing resources for members.

January's Cabinet reshuffle meant a new Minister for Local Government, Simon Watts. LGNZ had dinner with the Minister on his first official day in the job, hosted him at February's All-of-local-government event and had our first formal meeting of the year on 6 March. As the Minister said at our February event, we have a positive relationship and want to work together. He acknowledged local government was fatigued by waves of reform and that a lot of the cost and burden that falls on local government is because of central government legislation (as LGNZ's research last year demonstrated). We're looking forward to working constructively with the Minister.

The political year unofficially starts at Waitangi, which offers many opportunities to mix formally and informally with Ministers, MPs and Iwi leaders. This year LGNZ stepped up our involvement and had a strong presence, including a number of National Council members, who were part of an official pōwhiri and delivered a prayer for the nation at the Dawn Service.

In the advocacy and policy space, in November we launched a set of [funding and financing tools](#) that could make a difference for local government. These tools, which include things like sharing GST on new builds, congestion charging and value capture from growth, gained strong media coverage. We also highlighted to media the potential negative implications of rates capping, with Australian guest speakers at both our November and February All-of-local-government events underlining the negative fiscal impacts for Australian councils and communities.

Other highlights of this period included:

- A range of quality submissions shared with members, including on resource management and water services reform.
- The launch of our Electoral Reform Issues paper, with the draft position paper launching 13 March. As well as four-year terms this covers the inevitable decline of post and how to respond.
- Members can now access for free more than \$1.2 million worth of professional development assets via our Ākona professional development platform (this is what it would cost councils to commercially develop the 15 Ako hours and 22 courses available).
- We distributed a free Vote 25 toolkit to all member councils just before Christmas – which you can use and adapt to promote voter registration, standing and voting.

We always welcome your comments and feedback.

Ngā mihi
Sam and Susan

Champion

Government relations

In January a reshuffled Cabinet meant a new Minister for Local Government along with other portfolio shifts relevant to local government, including a new Transport Minister. We have seized on the reshuffle and our already-strong relationship with incoming Local Government Minister Simon Watts to reset the relationship between central and local government. Sam and Susan had dinner with Minister Watts on his first official day in the job, we've locked in regular ongoing meetings, and the Minister spoke at our All-of-local-government meeting on 27 February. As well as staying as long as he could to answer questions, the Minister joined Mayors, Chairs and Chief Executives for morning tea ahead of his session.

As well as sending the Minister [an immediate letter](#) on key issues, we have developed a briefing for the Minister that sets out the state of play of local government issues, including where there are opportunities to work together in support of New Zealand's economic development. [Read the Briefing to the Incoming Minister](#).

We have confirmed quarterly meetings with the Prime Minister throughout 2025. We also meet regularly with Infrastructure and Resource Management Reform Minister Chris Bishop, who now holds the Transport portfolio as well, with Regional Development Minister Shane Jones, and of course Minister Watts. During this four-month period, we met with Minister for Building and Construction Chris Penk and got a good insight into what he would like to achieve in the portfolio. He is keen to make changes work on the ground and, as he put it, "make life easier for councils not harder". We are in conversation with MBIE as to how options for the building consents regime might be received by councils and how they might work in practice.

We secured a strong line up of Ministers and representation from the Opposition at both the November and February All-of-local-government meetings and individual sector meetings.

Waitangi Day kicks off the political year and this year LGNZ had a strong delegation that included a number of National Council members. We held formal and informal meetings with local MPs and iwi leaders, and had the opportunity for conversations with a range of Ministers we would not normally meet with, like Education Minister Erica Stanford. Sam, Campbell and Susan attended the Waitangi Trust's dinner alongside with political leaders, including Minister Watts and the Leader of the Opposition. We had a particularly useful meeting with Northland MP Grant McCallum, who was sympathetic to our safety concerns relating for Māori elected members given the tenor of debate around Māori Wards referenda. He was action-focused and was keen to support neutral messaging that promoted safe and informed local elections. He was also interested in looking into working with us to brief National MPs on other local government issues such as funding and financing.

Media

Our media engagement means balancing standing up for councils with being seen as a constructive partner of the Government. LGNZ has gained proactive media coverage of our perspective on rates capping, and our launch of funding and financing tools, and the closure of regional newspapers. Our advocacy positions on all three topics tied into our wider strategy to make local government feel more relevant and improve ratepayers' understanding of issues faced by councils.

Over the past 12 months, the media landscape has shifted significantly with the closure of major platforms, key newsrooms and culling of experienced journalists. These shifts made it harder to place proactive stories but we have intensified our efforts and continue to gain traction on major advocacy issues important to councils and our communities.

An example of these efforts coming to fruition was the coverage of LGNZ's All-of-local-government meeting, which drew the attention of media outlets from across the country on a range of topics, from rates capping and four-year terms to a new stalking bill and housing growth.

We got coverage on our position on [rates capping](#), including [Newsroom](#) leading with a well-written piece alongside stories on [NBR](#), [BusinessDesk](#), [RNZ](#), [The Press](#) and [The Post](#). [Four-year terms](#) for local government was also a hot topic, with Sam Broughton appearing on the [Mike Hosking breakfast](#) on [Newstalk ZB](#) to discuss the issue, with his comments included in [The Post](#).

LGNZ's CE Susan Freeman-Greene and Invercargill Councillor Alex Crackett also spoke with [Stuff/ThreeNews](#) and [RNZ](#) about the Government's proposed [stalking legislation](#) and the need to increase safety for elected members.

On Friday, Minister Bishop's announcement around new and improved funding and financing tools to reduce the disincentives for housing growth for councils made headlines. Analysis articles ran on [Stuff](#), [NZ Herald](#) and the [Gisborne Herald](#), with Stuff's Luke Malpass penning an insightful piece on the financial conundrum facing councils that appeared in [The Press](#), [The Post](#) and the [Waikato Times](#).

Some other specific media highlights in the past four months include:

- LGNZ's rollout of [a funding and finance toolkit](#) for councils got plenty of traction.
- We urged caution around central government's proposed [rates capping](#) introduction in New Zealand.
- We advocated to the Government [to share IVL funding](#) with councils to reduce pressure on ratepayers.
- We [welcomed the new Minister of Local Government](#) and presented the reshuffle as an opportunity to collaborate more.
- Sam penned an [op-ed](#) for Stuff, talking about the benefits of a true partnership between local and central government.
- LGNZ spoke out about the proposed Government changes to the [water and waste levies](#).

- We [welcomed the move](#) towards benchmarking and more transparency, but pushed the Government to ensure any report card provides a 'full and accurate picture'

Local government funding and financing

In late November we launched a [set of 25 tools](#) to help councils better fund infrastructure and services – from sharing GST on new builds to value capture to improving councils' ability to recover costs.

It's a pragmatic list with three distinct tiers:

1. Tools that are on the Government's agenda
2. Tools the Government has shown an interest in
3. Tools councils want but the Government isn't interested in, so need longer-term advocacy.

While rates will always be local government's primary funding tool, these tools could make a real difference to the challenges councils face. We are starting to see the fruits of this work with the Government's announcement at our February All-of-local-government meeting on new tools that will see development contributions replaced with a development levy system, allowing councils to charge developers a share of long-term infrastructure costs – more on this below.

As well as the [set of tools](#), we developed some resources to support councils' conversations with communities and central government:

- [A set of key messages](#) explaining why we need new tools
- [Slides](#) with key messages and data
- [A draft op ed](#) that you can repurpose
- [A draft letter to your MP](#)

Treasury has released advice to the Minister of Finance on funding tools available to councils. The Minister is seeking to reduce funding calls on the Crown. Treasury considers that council funding tools are generally fit for purpose. Their view is that the barriers to the full use of these tools relate to political economy, such as a general resistance to increasing rates. This is a valid point, but LGNZ believes these tools need improvement to allocate costs better, address affordability, improve efficiency, and align government objectives with local incentives.

The Government's stance against rates increases and its consideration of rates caps risks deepening public resistance to existing funding tools and increasing pressure on Crown funding. LGNZ will continue to engage with Ministers on this issue and work to enhance public discourse on the relationship between the costs of services and infrastructure and rate rises.

Ratepayer Assistance Scheme (RAS)

The new Local Government Minister has expressed interest in progressing the RAS. The RAS would allow ratepayers to cheaply borrow for specific improvements or ratepayer charges and in support of local and central government priorities. By leveraging the high credit quality of local government

rates, it accesses efficient capital market financing, passing savings to ratepayers. The RAS lends directly to ratepayers, keeping councils financially whole.

We are looking to capitalise on the Minister's interest and secure the necessary financial commitment and legislative changes. Minister Watts is positive about the scheme and has identified potential alignment with his energy portfolio if the RAS could foster investment in rooftop solar generation. We are working with Rewiring Aotearoa, an electrification advocacy group, to develop this element of the scheme.

Infrastructure funding and financing

In November, the Government released an [infrastructure funding and financing framework](#). This framework outlines the principles and processes underpinning the Crown's funding and financing decisions. It will have implications across water, energy, housing, climate adaptation, and transport. The framework makes it clear that the Government intends to only fund or finance projects as a last resort (and in minimal viable quantities). The Government also expects user pays and private financing to play a greater role in infrastructure funding and financing. Local government is not mentioned in this framework.

LGNZ will engage with new government agency *Infrastructure Funding and Financing Ltd (NIFFCo)* to ensure this framework is operationalised with councils in mind. Operationalising the framework will be challenging, given the substantial investment required for future infrastructure and the limitations of user-pays models in some sectors, as highlighted by the Infrastructure Commission.

We are also engaging with DIA and MHUD on their current work on changes to the development contributions system.

The Minister for Infrastructure announced changes to New Zealand's infrastructure funding and financing settings at February's All of Local Government meeting. The Government will replace development contributions with a development levy system, allowing councils to charge developers a share of long-term infrastructure costs. There will be regulatory oversight of development levies to ensure charges are fair and appropriate. Councils will also have more flexibility to set targeted rates that apply to new developments. Finally, the Infrastructure Funding and Financing (IFF) Act will be improved for developer-led projects and expanded to support major transport projects like those led by NZTA.

LGNZ has welcomed these changes, which were in our funding and financing toolkit. We will await further detail and work to ensure these reforms work effectively on the ground for councils.

Regional deals

Instead of the initially announced approach of inviting five regions to participate, all councils were eligible to express interest in a Regional Deal by 18 December 2024.

The Minister was clear that councils should work together across a region when submitting an expression of interest. This meant providing a light-touch proposal with an outline of the drivers of economic growth in a region, what the region will do to unlock growth, and what the region needs

from central government to assist. These expressions of interest will be assessed, and the Infrastructure and Investment Ministerial Group will decide which regional deals proceed to the next steps, which involve a MoU process and final negotiation.

Our understanding is that new Minister may be interested in seeing more than one deal agreed by the end of 2025 (we will certainly be encouraging this), with more agreed by the end of 2026.

Rates capping

Rates capping was a significant topic at both the November and February All-of-local-government meetings. This included presentations on the operationalisation and impacts of rates capping from local government representatives from New South Wales and Victoria (in November); and on transparency as an alternative from South Australia (in February).

In Australia, while rates capping has been effective in terms of constraining rates increases, it has failed to deliver an optimal mix of local services and rates. It has degraded council delivery and left councils increasingly financially unstable. In every overseas jurisdiction that has implemented rates capping, councils are advising us to oppose it as strongly as we can because of its negative impacts on councils' ability to deliver for communities.

We raised concerns about rates capping in meetings with numerous ministers, highlighting this policy's risks for communities and advocating for alternative measures. We are suggesting performance reporting and benchmarking should be prioritised instead – and that these would better achieve the Government's aims.

Water services reform

The Local Government Water Services Bill was introduced in December, with submissions closing in late February. This piece of legislation will establish enduring settings for the new water services system and is expected to be enacted in mid-2025. The bill sets out arrangements for the new water services delivery system, a new economic regulation and consumer protection regime for water services, and changes to the water quality regulatory framework and the water services regulator (Taumata Arowai). To help members prepare their submissions, in December LGNZ shared an [explainer on the stage three legislation](#) with members, based on [proactively released decisions](#) on the future system. In January, we circulated a draft submission on the Local Government (Water Services) Bill for member input, and we expect to present our oral submission in March.

The Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) carried out a short consultation on levies to fund water services regulation, with submissions closing in late January. These levies will be collected from councils or their water organisations, and will fund or part fund the water services regulatory functions of Taumata Arowai and the Commerce Commission. These agencies are already empowered by legislation to charge levies in this way. Taumata Arowai proposes to recover \$20.658 million per annum for the next three years from local government through this levy, around 84% of its operating costs. The Commerce

Commission is seeking to recover \$6.5m per annum for the next two years from local government (or their water organisations) from their levy. They both propose to allocate these on a population basis, resulting in a total for both levies of \$5.44 per person per year.

Councils will soon start consulting on aspects of their Water Service Delivery Plans (WSDPs), which must be finalised by 3 September 2025. As councils consult their communities, for some councils it will become obvious how difficult it is for water services to be financially sustainable, especially if charges to consumers are kept low. We will support member councils by providing information, connecting members to support from DIA, and advocating for DIA to increase this support. The Minister was also clear when speaking at LGNZ's All-of-local-government event on 27 February that councils should reach out for help now rather than wait till September.

Resource management reform

We are awaiting Cabinet decisions on the “blueprint” for new legislation to replace the Resource Management Act (RMA), which we understand was presented to the Minister Responsible for RM Reform last month.

In the meantime, the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act, and the Fast Track Approvals Act were both passed by Parliament.

In February, we submitted on the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill. This legislation progresses targeted amendments to the Resource Management Act to improve its performance while work on replacing the RMA continues. We are still awaiting the accompanying changes to National Direction, which LGNZ will also submit on.

Some councils have approached LGNZ seeking support for removing specific projects from the Fast Track process. For example, Waimate District Council has written to Ministers raising concerns about the inclusion of the proposed Waste to Energy Plant at Glenavy, primarily on the basis of environmental, health and economic impacts. While LGNZ can't lobby central government about specific projects for individual councils, this serves as another illustration of the tension between central and local government decision making. The Fast Track Approvals Bill aims to speed up consenting for major infrastructure, but the inevitable trade-off is less input from local communities on significant proposals that affect their area. We will continue to reflect this broader concern in our advocacy work.

We are currently working on a plan for how LGNZ will respond to the significant volume of consultations expected in the RM space over the next 12-18 months.

Transport

We have surveyed Transport Forum members to get an idea of the cost of implementing the Government's new policy of variable speed limits in school areas. While councils are at varying stages in terms of quantifying the impact of this policy, early indications are that this is having a

significant fiscal impact on councils that are already facing significant fiscal pressure as a result of funding decisions made in the NLTP 24-27.

Transport Forum meeting dates have been locked in for 2025, and following the letter from Sam and Neil to Simon Bridges, NZTA board members Paul Dougherty and Warwick Isaacs attended the Transport Forum meeting in February.

In November, the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi released a discussion document on increasing the private share (i.e. the portion of fares not subsidised by central or local government) of public transport operating expenditure, and wrote to regional councils suggesting specific targets for this share. This had been signalled in both the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport and the National Land Transport Programme, both of which were released earlier in 2024. The Regional Sector and LGNZ have raised concerns about the impact on passenger fares in the media and with Ministers.

The new Transport Minister also holds the Housing, Infrastructure, and RM Reform portfolios, presenting significant opportunities for alignment. We have secured a meeting with Minister Bishop in March and also have briefed him in writing on the LGNZ Transport Forum, which met on 10 February and discussed how best to work with the new Minister.

The Government's 2025 Q1 action plan commits to passing the first reading of the Land Transport Management (Time of Use Charging) Bill. This bill, which was introduced last year, would enable time of use charging (aka congestion charging). This is one of our tier one funding and financing tools and LGNZ will be submitting on this legislation: the model adopted needs to give councils as much flexibility as possible.

Climate change

In November, the Office of the Auditor General has released a report [How well four councils are responding to a changing climate](#). The report highlights that climate change poses significant challenges for councils, requiring long-term strategies, governance clarity, and collaboration. While the four councils audited have taken steps to prioritise climate action, gaps remain in embedding these priorities into planning and resourcing. Recommendations include enhancing collaboration, setting clear climate objectives, strengthening performance measures, ensuring governance clarity, and improving public reporting. The Auditor-General encouraged all councils to consider these recommendations.

On 29 January, the Government published its [response](#) to the Finance and Expenditure Committee's inquiry into climate adaptation (which outlined high-level objectives and principles to guide development of New Zealand's climate change adaptation policy framework). The response signalled the Government intends to adopt a decentralised approach to climate adaptation, with decision-making and resource allocation occurring at the most-local level possible. This suggests residents and councils will generally bear the cost of adaptation. LGNZ will keep advocating for councils to be provided with adequate funding and policy tools to meet adaptation obligations. The Government has said it will consider the committee's recommendations as it finalises the adaptation framework and associated legislation, which is expected to be introduced this year.

Electoral Reform Working Group

Thank you for all your feedback on the Working Group's issues paper, which has been taken into account by the group in developing a draft position.

Mayor Nick Smith will be launching the Electoral Reform Working Group's draft position paper in March, including presenting to all zone meetings to get your feedback. As well as looking at a four-year parliamentary term, the group has also been looking at the unsustainability of postal voting and considering alternatives.

Other policy issues

Earthquake prone buildings

The steering group set up by MBIE to inform its comprehensive review of the seismic strengthening system has had its first meeting, with Nigel Bowen, Helen Craig, and Liam Hodgetts (all put forward by LGNZ) providing a local government voice at the table.

LGNZ has also set up our own informal Seismic Strengthening Group, chaired by Manawātū deputy mayor Michael Ford, which met for the first time in late November. This was a positive meeting that underscored what members want from the Government's comprehensive review of the seismic strengthening regime. This group will meet on an as-needed basis to help guide LGNZ's response to the Government's review, and to support wider advocacy for the remit from Manawātū District Council passed in 2023.

Stalking

We produced [a submission](#) on the Crimes Legislation (Stalking and Harassment) Amendment Bill, which introduces a new stalking and harassment offence and other measures to reduce the harm that victims experience. In our 2022 survey of elected members, 43% had experienced harassment, prejudice, threatening or derogatory behaviours in their role. Aggressive and abusive behaviours can constitute stalking – or be a precursor to it – and we want to see elected members better protected.

Update on 2024 remits

Remit	Progress update
Appropriate funding models for central government initiatives That LGNZ proactively promote and lobby for the development of a more equitable and appropriate funding model for central government initiatives.	This remit is being progressed as part of the wider funding and financing work programme (and is a core objective of this work).
GST revenue sharing with local Government That LGNZ be proactive in lobbying central government on sharing GST revenue with local	This remit is being progressed as part of the wider funding and financing work programme. We understand the Government is looking at

government, derived from local government rates and service fees related flood protection mitigation, roading, and three waters, for investment in these areas.	alternatives to this policy (such as more enabling changes) and will consider advice on this later this year.
Local Government Māori Wards and Constituencies should not be subject to a referendum That LGNZ lobbies central government to ensure that Māori wards and constituencies are treated the same as all other wards in that they should not be subject to a referendum. We oppose the idea that Māori wards should be singled out and forced to suffer a public referendum.	Now that legislation has been passed, we know that 42 councils will be holding a referendum on Māori wards. See the separate National Council paper on Māori wards, which discusses how LGNZ will support Te Maruata and the wider membership around the referendums and elections broadly.
Proactive lever to mitigate the deterioration of unoccupied buildings That LGNZ advocate to Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For legislative change enabling local authorities to compel building owners to remediate unoccupied derelict buildings and sites that have deteriorated to a state where they negatively impact the amenity of the surrounding area. • To incentivise repurposing vacant buildings to meet region-specific needs, for example, accommodation conversion. 	Late last year we had an initial discussion with Gisborne District Council to determine the work programme for progressing this remit, which was also discussed at the first meeting of the LGNZ Seismic Strengthening Group. Information from GDC is currently being used to develop a work programme.
Representation Reviews That LGNZ advocate for changes that support the provision of timely and accurate regional and sub-regional population data to councils for use in council representation reviews.	Statistics NZ is reviewing the methodology for the 2028 census. We are monitoring this process in case it provides an opportunity to progress this remit. A move to a four-year term, which we are actively lobbying for, would require a change in the timings of representation reviews so this remit is also informing the thinking of the Electoral Reform Working Group.
Community Services Card That LGNZ advocate to Central Government to amend the Health Entitlement Cards Regulations 1993 so that the cardholder can use the Community Services Card as evidence for the purposes of accessing Council services which would otherwise rely on a form of means testing.	We wrote to relevant Ministers asking that councils be allowed to make use of the Community Services Card when offering discounts to council facilities. We have yet to receive a response. We also put out a media release, which got good coverage, and engaged via social media.
Graduated Licensing System That LGNZ advocate for changes to the fee structure for driver licensing, better preparing young people for driver licence testing, and greater testing	MTFJ has agreed to progress this remit because it relates to its work with the Driving Change Network.

capacity in key locations throughout New Zealand, in order to relieve pressure on the driver licensing system and ensure testing can be conducted in a quick and efficient manner.	
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Connect

2025 calendar

We released a [final version of the 2025 calendar](#) in early December (though this remains subject to change if the need arises).

Vote25

In December, we shared our [free Vote25 toolkit](#) with member councils. This includes a set of creative assets that councils can customise, such as posters and social media tiles. The campaign covers all three phases: register to vote; stand for election; and vote.

All-of-local-government meetings

The November meeting, with a strong programme that focused on local government reform, drew more than 170 members. It was an opportunity to lay the foundations for stronger advocacy on key parts of reform in local government, such as rates capping. At that event we also launched the funding and financing toolkit discussed above, which gained strong media coverage.

February's All-of-local-government meeting focused on accountability and demonstrating value, with more than 180 members attending. Government speakers included Local Government and Climate Change Minister Simon Watts; Infrastructure, Transport, RMA Reform and Housing Minister Chris Bishop; and RMA Reform and Infrastructure Parliamentary Under-Secretary Simon Court. This was Minister Watt's first chance to address a large local government gathering in this role, and he set out his intention to work in partnership with local government while delivering on the reform agenda. Our guest speaker from South Australia's local government association shared how they managed to convince their government to not implement rates capping by implementing greater transparency; an advocacy approach that LGNZ is also taking.

The theme of the 1 May meeting is delivering infrastructure for growth. Confirmed speakers so far include Minister Chris Bishop and former Minister Steven Joyce – we'll be releasing the programme and inviting registrations in March. As usual, individual Regional, Metro and Rural & Provincial Sector meetings will happen on the following day.

Metro Sector

The Metro Sector meetings on 22 November and 28 February confirmed the group's focus areas for the remainder of the current electoral term, as follows:

1. Enabling and supporting economic development and growth by showcasing the role of cities as engines of the national economy and driving regional collaboration.
2. Lift LGNZ governance and accountability in order to improve LGNZ's impact.
3. Improve alignment of central and local government investment cycles to reduce inefficiencies and encourage more bipartisan agreement on key infrastructure decisions.

Regional Sector and Te Uru Kahika

The final meeting of the Regional Sector for the year included engagement with Hon Mark Mitchell, the Minister for Emergency Management, a discussion with Hon Simon Upton, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment on water and land use roles, and discussions on Taumata Arowai's stormwater performance standards and phase 3 of resource management system reforms.

LGNZ has met new Te Uru Kahika Executive Director Iain Maxwell to welcome him on board and build on the positive relationship we enjoyed with his predecessor Liz Lambert. We work closely to coordinate Regional Sector meetings and collaborate on policy work.

February's Regional Sector meeting included new Transport Minister Chris Bishop, Taumata Arowai on wastewater performance standards, and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on significant natural hazard events and recovery settings. This meeting also welcomed new Taranaki Regional Council Chair Craig Williamson, with Cr Charlotte Littlewood recently standing down from the Chair position.

Rural & Provincial

February's R&P meeting canvassed a number of areas impacting rural and provincial councils, with Local Water Done Well a key topic on people's minds, as well as new wastewater standards. The Department of Internal Affairs and Taumata Arowai spoke at the first R&P event of the year and took questions. Rural health was also a big topic so we had speakers address growing concerns over access to health in our rural communities and provided some examples of the hands-on role some councils are playing to bridge the gap. The Roading Efficiency Group also delivered a presentation.

Minister Chris Bishop used our February event as a platform to announce some major changes to local government funding and financing as part of his Going for Housing Growth programme. The event wrapped up with a session with KPMG's infrastructure financing expert Karen Mitchell on infrastructure funding and financing options such as using debt and PPPs.

SuperLocal25

Planning for SuperLocal25, which is from 16-17 July at the Te Pae Convention Centre, is well underway: the conference's theme will be Brilliant Basics and Beyond. We are currently finalising the programme and will open registrations in April.

Based on feedback from SuperLocal24, we have compressed the programme so that the event starts much earlier on the first day (the AGM will be at 8.30am on the Wednesday) and wraps up with the awards dinner on the Thursday night. This leaves Friday for visits to the wider region or travel home. Te Maruata and Young Elected Member hui will be held on Tuesday, before the conference, and there will be a breakfast for Women in Local Government at 7am on the Wednesday morning before the AGM.

Te Ao Māori

Iwi engagement

Waitangi presented new opportunities for engagement, thanks to LGNZ's representation by National Council. The Iwi Chairs Forum held one of their conferences ahead of the Waitangi commemorations at Waitangi, which allowed us to continue building that relationship as well as with Northland Iwi, hapū and whanau. It was the first year we were formally included in a pōwhiri at Waitangi, alongside the legislature, diplomats and the Waitangi Tribunal.

Te Maruata

Te Maruata met early in November to reflect on 2024 and look forward to 2025. The Treaty Principles Bill and broader election-related issues, including how to support members, were also a hot topic. Te Maruata also provided support to LGNZ's participation at Waitangi.

Te Maruata Rōpū whakahaere will hold its first official meeting of the year at the beginning of March. The focus will be on fleshing out plans for Elections 2025, preparations for Te huinga o ngā roma – the in-person whānui hui in April – and plans for the Te Maruata hui at SuperLocal25.

Te huinga o ngā roma will be held from 3-4 April in Taupo. Te huinga o ngā roma acknowledges the tributaries of Lake Taupō and the role of water in the revitalisation and connection of people and place, which will ground the event. There will be a range of inspiring speakers, workshops and discussions to equip, support and inspire members.

Young Elected Members Network

The annual YEM Hui took place in Christchurch from 16-18 October. It was held there despite Christchurch City Council's decision to withdraw from LGNZ, because the YEM Committee had decided earlier this year to shift away from having a host council, with the Committee taking on full responsibility for hosting. We worked closely with Cr Deon Swiggs (Environment Canterbury and member of the YEM Committee) on planning for the event. Former Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel delivered the keynote address, with the theme of the hui being "mā mua kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua" – driving change through community leadership. The programme was about councils empowering community leaders to make real change and equipping YEM with the key skills needed to make good decisions around council tables. We also had former YEM Lan Pham from the Greens and Cameron Luxton from the ACT Party give their perspectives on how to deliver for communities.

Tikanga sessions were organised to support members to prepare for the whakatau at the commencement of their hui.

Planning is now underway to work through how the YEM network want to address voter turnout and get more young people to stand in the next local election.

The YEM Committee met at the end of February to develop a plan for the elections – this includes how to get more young people to stand and vote, as well as induction material specific to supporting YEMs. We will also be holding a three-hour YEM hui before SuperLocal25.

Community Boards

The Community Board Executive Committee met in early November and again in February. The committee welcomed a new member, Ross Munro from Pleasant Point community board (who replaces Simon Britten who stepped down due to Christchurch City withdrawing from LGNZ).

The meeting reflected on discussions with the Remuneration Authority on the formula for setting community board remuneration and an option for recognising and compensating boards which have additional responsibilities.

CBEC is keen to strengthen alignment with both YEM and Te Maruata, and also discussed using Ākona for community board members and community board induction, and the impact of representation reviews and on community boards

CBEC is continuing to work on its Relationship Agreement guide for councils and community boards, with a draft available soon for consultation. CBEC is also working on a community board workshop session for SuperLocal25; providing support to boards going through representation reviews; and liaising with the Remuneration Authority ahead of its review of elected members' remuneration.

Women in Local Government

Last year we brought women elected members together online and in person at SuperLocal24 (at a pre-conference lunch with keynote speaker Nicola Willis). We've had a lot of feedback that this work is valuable and should continue. As a result, we've developed a plan for this work that includes creating opportunities to connect; advocacy for system change that improves all elected members' safety (like submitting in support of the stalking legislation currently before Parliament); and championing this work.

Member visits

Susan and Sam are on track to have visited all councils since Sam became President, with the last visits scheduled in early 2025. For the remainder of the triennium, we will have a structured programme of calling Mayors and CEs (by Susan and Scott) as well as ad hoc visits/calls as needed.

Support

Ākona

We are seeing an increase in users as members realise how comprehensive it is, and that they can use it to suit their needs. Ākona has about 500 active users, with 42 users choosing to engage with the platform over the summer break. Over 200 users have made use of the skills analysis tool and 483 members have enjoyed the top five e-modules.

Between November and February, we held six Ako hours attracting a total of 184 registrations – and many individual registrations were for groups attending together.

The value of Ākona to councils continues to grow. An interactive professional development platform with 15 Ako hours and 22 courses would cost about \$1.2 million if you paid for it commercially.

The Induction 2025 pre-elected package of learning is on track for release at the end of March. This package teaches people about what it means to be an elected member, including what councils actually do, and will include a series of animated videos, along with interactive e-modules. You'll be able to share this pre-elected package with anyone interested in standing for council (they don't have to be members).

The Mayor Induction Hui and EM Induction hui around the country have been booked and details released to councils, which have welcomed the early communication. We'll also be holding a Chair Induction Hui after regional councils have elected their chairs.

The Ako Hour Academy, which will provide post-induction learning for all elected members, is being built collaboratively with members, in our governance bi-monthly hui. The response has been very positive, with everyone we have spoken to committing to weaving Ākona into local induction activities. Our Learning and Development Manager is meeting with each council in turn to discuss what materials they could upload into the new Ākona platform so it's a one-stop shop for all elected member learning.

Te Korowai – CouncilMARK

Te Korowai has progressed from three successful trials to a soft launch.

We are now seeking registrations of interest for participation in Te Korowai in 2025. There are multiple ways to engage with the programme:

- **Full programme cycle:** This includes an independent assessment by external assessors, an evaluation by the independent evaluation panel, and a development workshop following the evaluation report.
- **Integrity survey:** This serves as a stepping stone for councils wanting to assess their ability to function with integrity. Similar to an engagement survey, it involves an organisation-wide

rollout — including elected members — followed by an in-person workshop to discuss the findings.

Roading Efficiency Group

LGNZ is a founding partner of the Road Efficiency Group Te Ringa Maimoa (REG) sector partnership, which is entering its 12th year. We welcome the continued collaboration with RCAs and support REG in rolling out a number of exciting initiatives:

- A new governance dashboard in the Transport Insights web portal that provides elected members with valuable insight into the performance and benchmarking of their road network and RCA – www.transportinsights.nz
- An extensive learning and development programme to continue to raise capability.
- Delivering the Consistent Condition Data Collection project, which captures surface condition data for all sealed roads for local authorities.

Learn more at www.nzta.govt.nz/reg

Governance support

The 2025-2028 edition of the LGNZ standing orders template was [published in late December](#). This version has been updated to include recent legislation and additional principles. It's also been redrafted in plain English. As we have done previously, three templates have been developed, one for city and district councils, one for regional councils and one for community boards.

The 2025-2028 Guide to Standing Orders will be published in March. It has been updated and expanded with additional guidance, including:

- Advice on implementing the Ombudsman's Guidance on public access to workshops;
- More information on delegations and setting agendas;
- Guidance on issues that emerged in the last term, such as using co-chairs and vacating the chair;
- Protocols for webcasting and people joining meetings remotely; and
- Templates for parental leave and childcare policies.

LGNZ continues to provide support to a number of councils experiencing tension between elected members and/or between elected members and CEs.