

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 14 March 2017 8:10 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: please forward to local government commission

Hi Garry could you send this through as it won't go through to info @lgc.govt.nz – keeps telling me my email is considered spam!!
Thanks Jo

Please accept my submission on West Coast Local Government arrangements as per attached.
Regards Joanne Howard

[REDACTED]

Dated 14th march 2017

Joanne Howard

[REDACTED]

West Coast Region

Types of alternative reorganization applications/other proposals for change

I do not want to submit an alternative application as I don't think it would be in the best interests of residents and ratepayers.

I do support the existing councils sharing the delivery of particular services.

These could be defined by the mayors and chairs in their triannual agreement and determined by current needs and resources available to the councils at the time. (Resources including staffing capacity and skills.)

The greater Canterbury region is an example where individual councils collaborate and different districts are tasked to lead initiatives.

Reasons behind my decision:

1. Unitary councils have not reduced costs. No amalgamation to date has resulted in overall savings to ratepayers. The original request for change was in the belief that significant costs could be made. Those I have spoken to supporting change also falsely believe that savings will occur – Under a unitary council you would be trying to govern an area the length of Auckland to Wellington! The time and travel cost of covering the area from a central location would be horrendous. Current centralized services from other agencies have resulted in poor service to remote areas and staff inefficiencies due to travel. I think the average person doesn't understand the main drivers of rates e.g. 25% roading, Administration and representation are small factors.
2. Lack of local democracy. I attend most council meetings in Westport. A unitary council would reduce/stop my ability to engage with the council and advocate for the community. Unitary councils result in more community boards – this adds another hierarchical level to democracy. My experience with the Inangahua Community Board is that the timeliness of decisions is reduced and that adding that additional level results in inevitable communication loss. The size of the Buller district currently makes it challenging to represent all.e.g. Maruia, Karamea, Punakaiki.
3. Catchments. All the study/research I have done over the years suggest that governance is best based on water catchment and/or other geographical catchments. Obviously these are numerous on the coast and disperse populations means amalgamating some. Main rivers are obviously the Karamea, Buller, Grey, Taramakau, Hokitika and Haast with major road links being Buller Gorge to Nelson, Lewis, Arthurs and Haast passes. This makes sense too with emergency management with bridges and bluffs isolating communities. I like the shared model as you can have shared management but it is important to keep resources (including people) in catchments.
4. We have to work to our advantages on the Coast as we are a sparse and isolated population. People live here for the environment and because they choose to live in "communities". Successful communities are driven from the bottom up. I believe that we will be more successful by devolving more responsibility to community level, greater engagement and a unitary council do not fit. At the Inangahua Community Board meetings the public actively engage with the board and public forums are well attended with positive conversations. As the communities get larger there is less engagement as people feel more disconnected with decision making bodies. This is not what I want to see for the coast.
5. Loss of representation, democracy. Distance to attend meetings. A good council should be representative of the community. The pool able to stand as councillors would be reduced due to work and family commitments, ability to travel. It would particularly affect the younger demographics. It would be detrimental to the establishment of youth councils. Welfare of people when they have to travel the distances involved on the Coast.

What is working well and what we should be focusing on:

Collaboration/shared services. Agreement in place between 4 councils. Mayors and Chairs meetings. Regional strategy.

Civil Defence

Economic Development

Tourism

Professional services and staff

Common policies/procedures:

Building consents

Freedom camping

Liquor licensing etc.

Library – shared services and memberships so Punakaiki and Reefton have options of using Buller or Grey services.

Collaboration goes further than just West Coast – working with neighbours – Tasman, Hurunui. Working with other councils e.g. Selwyn doing building consents.

Supporting information:

Inconclusive evidence of economies of scale. "29 per cent of research finds U-shaped cost curves, 39 per cent find no statistical relationship between per capita expenditure and size, 8 per cent find evidence of economies of scale, and 24 per cent find diseconomies of scale" (p.

393). <http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/havsay/pdf/royalcommission/7-literaturereview.pdf>

In her preliminary assessment of the Toronto amalgamation, Slack (2000) concludes that while there may have been good reasons to undertake the amalgamation, "it is highly unlikely, however, that the amalgamation will lead to cost savings. On the contrary, it is more likely that costs will increase (p. 17).

"whereas the Victorian State Government claimed that its amalgamation programme would yield direct cost savings of 20 per cent, the net results has been only 8.5 per cent, most of which was derived from competitive tendering and not restructuring" (p.75). Similarly, in South Australia the authorities promised savings of 17.4 per cent, but only achieved a mere 2.3 per cent" (p. 75). District is doing joint tendering eg insurance

Pole (2000) uses a 1999 Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Citizen Survey to study citizen responses to a municipal amalgamation that created the Halifax Regional Municipality. This survey explore citizens assessments of amalgamation three years after the experience and what factors best explain citizens' views towards amalgamation. The survey found that opposition to the amalgamation legislation and its outcome increased since amalgamation took place. 66% of citizens opposed amalgamation in the 1999 survey compared with from 42% in 1995 (when the amalgamation occurred). The table below outlines the survey results.

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http://www.mdl.co.nz/Blog/x_blog_uid/51/topic/Local+Government+amalgamations.html

What can we learn from New South Wales?

The New South Wales review provides a very good case study. Both the Independent Panel on Local Government Reform, and the Destination 2036 process out of which it came, have placed a strong emphasis on encouraging councils to develop their own solutions. However, the Panel has also gone to considerable lengths to make it clear that change is inevitable, simply because of the changed environment in which local government functions, and the challenges it now needs to deal with. The New South Wales approach is probably as good an example as one could hope for of an initiative that really recognises the value of local government, and the importance of enabling councils to make their own decisions about their future if it all possible.

Findings indicate that a number of issues arising from the structure, range of functions, and territorial scale of unitary councils, limit their potential to facilitate more integrated management through increased levels of comprehensiveness and coordination. It is recommended that no further unitary councils are created. In addition, although unitary authorities are not the ideal institutional form within which resource management occurs, practical steps to enhance the integrative potential of existing unitary authorities are suggested.

<https://researcharchive.lincoln.ac.nz/handle/10182/4356>