

South Wairarapa District Council
Submission to the Local Government Commission
On the Draft Proposal for Reorganisation of Local Government In Wellington

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A Staples".

Adrienne Staples

Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P Crimp".

Paul Crimp

Chief Executive

Do you wish to be heard

Yes

In general, do you support the draft proposal but with some changes

South Wairarapa District Council, by unanimous resolution, does not support the draft proposal.

SWDC endorses the original Unitary Authority application passed by resolution of the Council of the day, therefore the changes would be of such a magnitude to render this proposal defunct

What do you support and why

SWDC supports the formation of a Unitary Authority as outlined in the reorganisation application submitted 21 May 2013. This was supported by a unanimous resolution by the Council of the day.

In general, do you oppose the draft proposal?

Yes, SWDC by unanimous resolution, opposes the draft proposal

In general, do you oppose the draft proposal but want an alternative model for change?

Yes, SWDC opposes the draft proposal but does support an alternative model.

SWDC, by unanimous resolution of the council of the day supported the reorganisation application for a Unitary Authority submitted to the Local Government Commission on 21 May 2013.

SWDC has not formed a view on the appropriate governance structures for the western part of the region.

What do you oppose and why

SWDC opposes the proposal in its entirety

Many of the facts are incorrect, and the recommendations ultimately made are not consistent with the conclusions outlined in the document. For example, the recommended one Wellington Council is well down the list compared to other options. Another example is the statement that a Wairarapa Unitary would be viable; however this is then rejected later in the document as being not viable.

In particular the key issues of concern are:

Loss of local representation

Currently South Wairarapa Residents are well served by a ratio of 1 Mayor/Councillors for 980 residents.

If you include community boards this ratio improves to 1 elected member for every 445 residents

Under the proposal these ratios blow out to less than one Councillor for the entire SW district – 9800 residents, and covering an area of 2,484 square kilometres

Even if the local boards are taken into consideration the ratio still remains at a much higher level, (assuming 0.67FTE councillor) being one elected representative for every 2,670 residents.

In addition, and this is supported by the most recent DHB elections, there is a distinct possibility that the persons elected would be from Masterton being the most populous centre.

Loss of Local Decision making

Allied to the representation discussion above, it is apparent that the key decisions will be made by the metro centric Wellington Council.

While there is some commentary about the role and responsibilities of the local boards indicating decision making powers the proposed local board responsibilities appear to be heavily restricted as to the actual decision making powers as evidenced by phraseology like "oversight" "within agreed limits" "within regional policies and budgets".

Loss of local planning

Under the proposal, the planning function has certainly moved from the Wairarapa to the Regional body. The Wairarapa is a distinct environment, a separate catchment, unique natural structures that require a solution fit only for this environment.

It is this Councils view that it would be a backward step in terms of the local environment to have the inevitable metro slant in this area.

The three local Councils have already arrived at a Combined District Plan that has proven very robust, ensuring consistent local decision making.

Summary

The key theme from the above is that local will be taken from the residents of the Wairarapa.

Indeed, the Commission has chosen to leave the word "local" from its definition, whether deliberately or not it is an indication of the general thinking, the proposal is not about local at all.

Local is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2002, and is stated in its purpose.

Local is described as "something nearby, or in the immediate area"

Certainly this proposal does not meet this test.

If you want changes of some sort, can you suggest new wording

SWDC endorses the reorganisation application for a Unitary Authority , submitted 21 May 2013, as the appropriate Governance Structure for the Wairarapa.

What do you think good local government would look like in the Wellington

While South Wairarapa District Council recognises the need for change, it does not have a view on the structure for the wider region.