



16 August 2024



Kia ora [REDACTED]

Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act request for information relating to local government amalgamation discussions

We refer to your LGOIMA request dated 30 July 2024 requesting information relating to local government amalgamation discussions.

Our response to your request follows:

- **A list from the past 12 months of all formal council meetings, briefings, workshops, councillor-only discussions, or meetings with other elected representatives from other councils in the Wellington region (either via a regional forum such as the Wellington Regional Leadership Forum, Wellington Mayoral Forum etc, or other one-one-one or group discussions) that your mayor has attended where the issue of local government amalgamation has been discussed.**

Please see table following.

- **A summary of what was discussed at each event and any actions taken as a result.**

Please see table following.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact me on 06 3706300.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Boulton
Chief Advisor

Date	Meeting (if relevant)	What was discussed/action taken
2023-08-18	Mayoral Forum (Wellington Region)	Future for Local Government in the Wellington Region. Suggestion made to have conversations with the respective Councils soon. Action: Wairarapa Councils have formed a working group already to work on this process.
2023-08-21	Wairarapa Mayors and Deputy Mayors meeting	No notes taken, but amalgamation was discussed.
2023-09-11		Letter to Carterton and Masterton Mayors - introductory discussion – from Local Government Commission. No notes taken, but meeting set for 9 October 2023.
2023-10-20	Mayoral Forum (Wellington Region)	Amalgamation in the Wellington region. Individual Councils have met with members of the incoming Government and have discussed amalgamation or new shapes for local government in the region. The incoming Government has indicated a willingness to explore amalgamation in the region, provided there is agreement across the region on a proposal. Action: Daran and Mayor Baker to provide a one-page summary of a potential model for local government in the Region for a session after the iwi forum in January. To be circulated prior to the next Forum.
2023-12-22		Documents on the 2017 amalgamation proposal were emailed to elected members.
2024-02-16	Mayoral Forum (Wellington Region)	<p><u>Regional Reorganisation</u> Mayor Baker introduced the discussion on potential reorganisation options.</p> <p>The Mayors and CEs have prepared an initial discussion document, based upon their conversations.</p> <p>The indicative option is three territorial authorities, a regional council, and to introduce local boards.</p> <p>There is also a remaining question regarding the Wairarapa, and its position within the structure. Given representation is calculated on a population basis, this could result in the Wairarapa being allocated around two members in a regional council model.</p>

		<p>Mayor Baker has spoken to Ministers regarding this topic, and they are of the view that all voices around the table must support this for it to move forward. Both Ministers are expecting to discuss this, and water delivery, on 22 March. There are differing views around the table. Most mayors are up for the discussion. Questions were asked about the representation for the Wairarapa, and what would happen to the Tararua District.</p> <p>Conversations with Iwi to date show they are supportive of reorganisation in principle.</p> <p>Daran noted that this conversation is very linked with the three waters conversation as well, and that it may need to move in step with any reorganisation proposals. Mayor Baker noted that local representation is important, and this could be achieved by setting up local boards in the new structure.</p> <p>Daran proposed putting the establishment of local boards into the “next steps” area, as a level of detail that can be worked out later.</p> <p>It was discussed what the problem any reorganisation would be attempting to solve. Mayor Baker and Daran will discuss the outcomes of this meeting and see if there is consensus on any options prior to the meeting with the Ministers.</p>
2024-02-19	Wairarapa Mayor and Deputy Mayor meeting	No notes taken.
2024-02-28	Council Workshop	Amalgamation work programme mentioned under “other regional work”.
2024-03-06	LTP Documents/meetings	Mentioned as assumption in LTP documents that amalgamation will not happen during the life of the plan.
2024-03-21	Mayoral Forum (Wellington Region)	Confidential notes – However, the issue was updated to MDC through Mayor Caffell during the Mayor’s Report at the 2024-05-08 Council meeting.
2024-04-03		Media Release – MDC defers amalgamation discussions.
2024-05-08	Council meeting	Mayor Caffell advised that the last Mayoral Forum meeting had been attended by Simeon Brown and Chris Bishop. Three waters, regional deals and amalgamation were discussed – the indication from the Ministers were that they want councils to

		<p>sort those out themselves. On the amalgamation question, they advised that the government won't be forcing councils to do anything – councils will have to do it themselves. Water has taken over the discussion.</p>
<p>2024-05-10</p>	<p>Mayoral Forum (Wellington Region)</p>	<p>Simpson Grierson and LGNZ gave a presentation on Local Government Reorganisation. A Draft Position Statement on Amalgamation was tabled, noting that in the Wairarapa, there was no agreement on the appetite to discuss change.</p> <p>Mike Wakefield (Simpson Grierson) and Mike Reid (Local Government New Zealand) presented on the history of local government reorganisation in New Zealand, and the potential options for the region.</p> <p>Members requested the speaking notes of the presenters or further information on the second option presented (Council initiated reorganisation proposals).</p> <p>Key points: Government need to address fundamental issue of funding and new revenue streams; need to see advantages of joining together; will not be able to commit to rates savings through amalgamation; will need to demonstrate to ratepayers and communities what they are getting over time (value for investment); Ministers will have expectations re delivery; current focus is on water entity which forces councils to think about amalgamation; opportunities for community engagement with local elections next year.</p> <p>Of the Wairarapa Councils, appetite to explore reorganisation expressed only by Carterton. HCC, PCC, UHCC and WCC happy to explore further, though Mayor Whanau expressed significant reservations.</p> <p>Agreed: The four metro councils will have discussions and see where they come to outside the Forum on any amalgamation.</p> <p>Agreed: Circulate information on Subpart 1B process.</p>