



MEDIA RELEASE – 21 MAY 2013

WAIRARAPA SEEKS INDEPENDENCE FROM WELLINGTON

Strong community demand for Wairarapa to be left out of any Wellington regional super city scheme has resulted in an application to form a new separate unitary authority being filed with the Local Government Commission (LGC).

Under the proposal, the Carterton, Masterton and South Wairarapa district councils merge into a Wairarapa unitary authority, which will extend its activities to include the functions now performed by the Greater Wellington Regional Council in the three territories.

Reflecting the wide community preference for the independent unitary authority option, councillors of the Carterton, Masterton and South Wairarapa district councils voted 24 to 4 to approve the reorganisation application for submission to the LGC.

As proposed, the new authority will comprise a Wairarapa mayor and 12 councillors elected on a ward-basis, with an expanded community board structure to facilitate local participation in the decision making.

An extensive process of investigation, community debate and consultation dating back to 2010 has resulted in the reorganisation application presented to the LGC.

A succession of polls by Colmar Brunton, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Wellington City Council, Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, Kapiti Coast District Council and the three Wairarapa councils, have shown consistent and substantial support of up to 90% for the independent Wairarapa unitary authority option, with little public confidence in the Wellington super city alternative.

“Positive consideration of how best to meet the Government’s desire for improvements in the performance of local government has resulted in a rigorous process with all options fully investigated and tested,” say the Wairarapa Mayors Adrienne Staples, Garry Daniell and Ron Mark.

“Following independent viability assessments by some of the most highly-regarded experts on governance processes, the three councils are confident the unitary authority proposal is the most cost-effective and affordable option for our community,” say the Mayors. “It also offers our community some much-needed certainty about their future, after an unsettling period since it became clear that change was inevitable.”

“The final plan for one unitary authority is the result of a community-led process which set the vision and objectives for local governance in Wairarapa and reflects the overwhelming desire of the vast majority of our ratepayers to determine their own futures and not be ruled by Wellington as part of a super city.”

Having received the application, the LGC is now required by law to assess how it will meet the needs of the Wairarapa community and to gauge the level of public support for the proposed change.

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