



Commission thanks Wairarapa community

24 February 2016

The Local Government Commission is appreciative of the Wairarapa public's attendance and contributions at public meetings to discuss local government reform in their area.

"We want to thank people for giving up their evening to share their ideas on what's important for local government in the Wairarapa," said Commission Chair Sir Wira Gardiner.

"The purpose of the meetings was to put the people of Wairarapa at the front and centre of the process," he said. "We wanted to bring them into the loop on our discussions with councillors to date, to find out how they would like to be consulted, and better understand what's important to them in thinking about strengthening local government in the Wairarapa."

On Tuesday night at the Martinborough Town Hall, in association with the South Wairarapa District Council, the Commission completed the third of its initial public consultation meetings. About 70 people were present taking attendances, including at Masterton and Carterton last week, to about 300.

"Towards the end of the meeting, we were challenged to keep up the transparent and inclusive process and we intend to," Sir Wira said.

The meetings over the last week are part of an ongoing process – after the withdrawal of the proposal for a Wellington-wide unitary council and following a successful reset in the relationship between the Commission and Wairarapa mayors and councillors.

"These occasions have been an opportunity to do likewise with Wairarapa people," Sir Wira said. "We wanted to hear what was important to them and their communities. And we wanted to get initial reactions and input into possible options for local government reform that could help address these priorities.

"The themes that came through were broadly similar to those aired by submitters in the early stages of the reorganisation process: local identity, a stronger 'voice', keeping costs down, environmental standards, and connections to Wellington, for example."

The Commission would now spend some time assessing the information gathered, including feedback on some of the options discussed, and do more detailed work before returning in May/June for further public consultation.

"We aim to make a progress announcement in July so as not to interfere with the local body elections in October," Sir Wira said.

Media contact:

Simon Cunliffe | Local Government Commission | Department of Internal Affairs *Te Tari Taiwhenua*
DDI +64 4 474 8164 | MOB +64 27 809 3833 | Simon.Cunliffe@dia.govt.nz