



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF UPPER HUTT

Sir Wira Gardiner
Chair
Local Government Commission
P O Box 5362
Wellington 6145

File: 306/02-013

14 March 2018

Dear Sir Wira

Strengthening the Region – A Regional Response

Thank you for your invitation to respond to the recommendations in your report *Strengthening the Wellington Region*. This collective response is on behalf of the nine local authorities in the Wellington region.

As the Report outlines there has been substantial progress with regional collaboration processes on many fronts. The region has successfully created through Wellington Water a company that provides strategic oversight, management and implementation across 3 waters and as a trusted adviser partner we are working towards an enhanced relationship over the coming months and years. We already successfully work through the Regional Transport Committee to undertake long-term planning and prioritisation for transport networks across the region. In recent years we have also established the Lets Get Wellington Moving alliance (with NZTA) to develop a strategic plan for Wellington's future transport network as we expect this to continue into collaborative delivery mechanisms as we move to the implementation phase. We have the Wellington Regional Strategy that provides a strategy for regional economic development and which is delivered through Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA). In the emergency management space we have led the country on a successful regional collaborative model through the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office (WREMO) – over the next few years we are exploring an expansion of their remit into resilience planning. We also have a number of ad-hoc working groups where councils come together to share knowledge and develop joint approaches – an example of this is the Wellington Region Climate Change Working Group.

Whilst your report contended that these processes can be lengthy and inefficient, we consider that joint working builds effective working relationships for the long term as well as delivering cost-effective outcomes.

We support the Commission's (Recommendations 2 and 3) in developing these collaborative processes, including actively supporting the further development of the Wellington Water model. We intend to continue to align processes and share technical expertise and we also support the exploration of whether the other councils should join Wellington Water – this will of course depend on whether this will result in improved efficiency and effectiveness for residents and ratepayers in these districts.

Your Report also proposes that councils work together in a more formal governance arrangement on other cross-boundary issues such as land use and transport planning (Recommendation 1). The Report indicates that this has the potential to enable more comprehensive solutions, speed up joint action, and reduce social costs and productivity losses that occur as a result of delays in processes.

We recognise there are many benefits to be realised through cross-boundary planning on issues of regional importance and scale. We have previously considered the case for a Regional Spatial Plan and recognise that this could improve the integration of national, regional and local level planning and delivery. However the structure of local government in the region (with a regional council and eight territorial authorities) and the lack of a legislative mandate in the relevant legislation (RMA, LTMA, LGA) means that this is not practical at this time.

We do however believe that there are substantive opportunities for better integrated planning in our region that can be pursued within the current context. One opportunity being explored at present is the idea of a Regional Investment Plan. This would enable a more joined up approach to investment in infrastructure and other facilities across the region, enable connections to be made to the substantial central government investment in the region and allow opportunities to leverage this investment to be explored and actioned. This could include fast-tracking of major economic development projects that will drive the continued growth of the region.

This Regional Investment Plan is being explored through discussions with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and is being progressed through the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee and the Mayoral Forum. There is strong support for this approach across all councils in the region as confirmed at the Mayoral Forum on 1 December 2017.

We are committed to exploring further collaboration opportunities on a regional or sub-regional basis as they arise.

In summary we would like to thank the LGC for their work within the Wellington region and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wayne', written in a cursive style.

Wayne Guppy

CHAIR, WELLINGTON REGION MAYORAL FORUM