

MAYOR'S COLUMN



Staff and ratepayer welfare at heart of Council's 3W stance

The impact of the Government's Three Waters Reform on council staff and the Waimate community was spelt out at Council's March meeting. Our chief executive, Stuart Duncan, said that in 35 years of local government work he's never seen such a highly destructive and irresponsible process at work.

In a nutshell, the new national water entity wants to cherry pick local government staff throughout New Zealand, at a time when councils – like many other large businesses – are struggling to fill roles because of a labour shortage.

In my view the reform, as currently planned, would gut localism and democracy instead of building it up. It's absolutely appalling the way the reforms have been handled – particularly the uncertainty for our staff is unforgivable.

We're struggling to fill staff vacancies, and some of this is probably because people don't know what the future holds for local government.

This isn't a small council issue, it's a local government issue across New Zealand. In the meantime, we're continuing our business-as-usual approach and supplying the best level of services, as effectively and affordably as possible.

Council staff are also our friends, neighbours and community members, and we're doing our best to protect them and have our concerns heard in Wellington.

Until next time, take care.

CIVIC AWARDS RECOGNISE COMMUNITY SERVICE

People and organisations who help make our district such a great place to live are honoured each year by the Council.

This year's Waimate District Civic Awards acknowledged the contributions of four senior volunteers, one youth volunteer and a group/organisation who were recognised and thanked for their community service.

The 2023 Individual Civic Award recipients are Andrea Atkinson, John Coles, Peter Hughes and Bern Sommerfeld.

The Youth Civic Award recipient is Katelyn Ronson.

The Group/Organisation recognised for service is the Theatre Company of Waimate.

Mayor Craig Rowley described this year's recipients as being the unsung heroes in the field of voluntary community service. It was important to thank and recognise them, he said.

"The work they do in the community is one of the reasons our district is such a great place to live. They provide an energy and diversity that adds to a thriving community."

Celebration of community – Waimate's 2023 civic awards recipients pictured with Mayor Craig Rowley (centre). From left: John Coles, Bern Sommerfeld, Andrea Atkinson, Katelyn Ronson, Peter Hughes and representing the Theatre Company of Waimate, Vanessa Morgan.



FREE Training Opportunities

Please contact **Lisa Dobson** for further information and to register on 027 257 8578 or email lisa.dobson@waimatedc.govt.nz

4 credits
.....
Level 3

Manage Workplace Drug & Alcohol Impairment

Employers welcome

Learn how to recognise the signs that someone may be impaired and putting workplace safety at risk.

 **Monday 1 May 2023**

 **Waimate Event Centre**

11 credits
.....
Level 2

Customer Service Kickstarter

2-day course

Grasp the skill of interacting and selling to a diverse audience while working in a team.

 **Tuesday 2 May and Wednesday 3 May 2023**

 **Waimate Event Centre**



GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Council invites applications for financial assistance from clubs, groups and organisations within the Waimate District for the following:

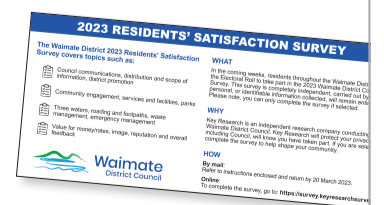
1. Community Grant – funding to assist with local community projects.
2. Sports Grant – provides funding for local sports projects.
3. Sport NZ Rural Travel Fund – provides a travel subsidy for sports clubs, and for schools competing in regular local sports and competitions.

All applications must be received by midday Friday 5 May 2023, and sent to the Grants Administrator, PO Box 122, Waimate 7960, emailed to info@waimatedc.govt.nz, or delivered to the Waimate Event Centre, 15 Paul Street, Waimate. For more information visit the grants page at waimatedc.govt.nz.

RESIDENTS' SURVEY

Thank-you to the more than 530 participants who responded to Council's 2023 Residents' Satisfaction Survey last month.

Independent research company Key Research managed the survey project and is preparing a report that we expect to discuss at a Council workshop in June.





GLENNAVY PARK PROJECT PROGRESSING WELL

Stage one of the Glenavy Recreation Reserve redevelopment project is almost completed. The walking tracks have been reinstated, a tree and native species plan is underway and the Pocket Park (a bike park within the reserve) has been completed – this is a terrific asset with BMX jumps and viewing platforms. The final piece of work for stage one is to reinstate the fences and gates that were removed, and this should be underway during April.

The Glenavy Recreation Reserve Redevelopment planning group will host a formal reopening of the reserve soon and bring the community up-to-date with plans for stage two. This will include the native and exotic tree planting plan along with adventure play spaces within the reserve. There will also be an opportunity to talk about how the wider community can get involved.

Parks and Reserves Manager Alison Banks said that Kelvin Wilson from Leathwick Contracting did an outstanding job of the design and build for the Pocket Park. “We can’t wait to see the community and visitors to Glenavy take full advantage of the park. Also, a huge thank you and acknowledgement to Shingle Supplies who have supported stage one of the project. It is great to see the generosity of local businesses when it comes to these types of projects that will benefit the whole community.”

The project is being funded from the sale of trees harvested from the reserve site and a contribution from Council’s subdivision recreation reserve, up to a total of \$104,000, with opportunities to work with the community to access external funding also being explored.

VEHICLES FOR SALE

If you’re in the market for a good used vehicle that has been very well maintained, Council has two RAV4 hatchbacks for sale on TradeMe. They both close Tuesday 11 April, at 7:15pm. You can find them at listing numbers 4054653875 and 4054652345.

COUNCIL MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS

Tuesday 18 April 2023, Council Chamber, 125 Queen Street, Waimate.

9:30am – Ordinary Council Meeting, commencing with Public Forum
Followed by Long Term Plan Workshop

Tuesday 2 May 2023, Council Chamber, 125 Queen Street, Waimate.

9:30am – Open Workshop
Followed by Long Term Plan Workshop

Agendas are available on Council’s website waimatedc.govt.nz at least two days prior to a meeting.

Please contact the Committee Secretary on karalyn@waimatedc.govt.nz or phone 03 689 0038 to receive a Microsoft Teams link, or to arrange to speak at the public forum.

SAVING MONEY OR BUILDING COMMUNITIES: WATER REFORM’S RISKS TO DEMOCRACY

Uncertainty about the future of local democracy, along with soaring mental health worries for staff are the unwelcome results of the Government’s Three Waters Reform says Waimate District Council chief executive Stuart Duncan.

The Government’s legislation for three waters has a disastrous blind-spot, and that is any real duty-of-care to the viability and relevance of local councils, their people, and their communities.

Council-run water, wastewater and stormwater services will be transferred to one of four Crown water entities by July 1 next year. Right now, the transitional unit for the new water entity is cherry-picking staff from local government and leaving councils to clean up the mess. The staff likely to be taken also contribute to a very wide range of other council activities. Their loss would cripple much of what councils currently do (and much larger councils than Waimate).

Staff wellbeing is affected by the time-hungry demands of dealing with the reform. At the back of people’s minds are questions like will we have to cut services? Will local government have to recreate itself and provide new services, and what could these be?

What will happen to our water services staff who aren’t poached by the new water entities?

Certainly, as a good employer we’ll protect these people and their employment, but they may need to re-train.

The connection between all these concerns is the glaring lack of information from Government about what functions may be available to replace three waters activities.

Waimate District Council has 13 ‘core’ three waters staff out of its total workforce of 85. The new entities need people with a wide range of skills associated with the development and management of three waters infrastructure. It’s not just engineering staff; it’s IT staff, revenue staff with a familiarity with local government rating and other revenue systems, administrative staff, and policy staff familiar with the local government context and relevant legislation and practice.

It’s not just technical expertise, it’s also the institutional knowledge base - an awareness of the local environment - especially with infrastructural resilience planning given the severe impact of Cyclone Gabrielle.

We have a tight labour market already, and the practical reality is that the labour market for people familiar with what’s involved in managing water services is essentially a local

government labour market. Take people out of councils and there is no other pool to draw from - there simply aren’t the people.

Shadow of Rogernomics

The Government’s argument for the reform rests on the claimed benefits for communities: state-of-the-art infrastructure at an affordable cost. The argument is based solely on comparing the financial implications of staying with the status quo or moving to the new delivery model – the glaring omission is the human cost of these reforms.

Turns out that the philosophy of the Rogernomics reforms of the late 1980s casts a long shadow. Rogernomics assessed the benefits of local or regional government in financial terms, and that’s been the Government’s approach with three waters.

It misses the point that in many communities (and especially New Zealand’s rural and provincial communities) the council is a major contributor to a wide range of essential community activities and outcomes.

While some have argued that people don’t care who they’re paying for their water infrastructure, so long as it’s delivered, the reality goes much deeper than that. The people who work at your local council – whether they’re at the pipes and delivery end, or the rating end – are also your friends, neighbours and community members. If we are to lose these people from our local councils, there’s a corresponding loss in both our institutional memory at work, and in our community. The government will say that these employees will remain in the same locality as they were before the reform, but we all know that to get the cost efficiencies as claimed by the government, the workforce will be centralised, service levels will suffer, and the customers will pay.

Rural and provincial councils are typically among the most important institutions in their district. They’re a powerful although currently under-utilised resource by Central Government for enabling communities to control their futures. Disabling councils means disabling the communities’ ability to help shape their futures.

Lack of information from Government creates barriers and mistrust. It’s no wonder that so many councils and their communities remain opposed to the current water reforms.

To read the full report, visit the Council’s submissions and reports page on the Three Waters Reform section at waimatedc.govt.nz.

WASTE-BUSTING FUNDING

Do you have an idea for a project to cut waste in Canterbury – for instance reducing plastics and avoiding waste completely? Funding is available from the Canterbury Waste Joint Committee for projects that can apply across the region. The funding round closes on May 28.

Find out more by visiting the Waste Minimisation in Canterbury grant page at <https://ccc.govt.nz/culture-and-community/community-funding/waste-minimisation-in-canterbury-grant>.



Waimate
District Council

