

RANGITIKEI AT THE TABLE

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

If local government and Council business are not things you usually think about, now is the time to take notice.

The Government has introduced a fast-tracked "Head Start" process for councils wanting to amalgamate and form larger unitary authorities. In plain English, that means local government is changing: Fewer councils, larger council areas, and changes to how local services are delivered and decisions are made.



Councils that want to take part in this process have been given until Sunday 9 August 2026 to submit a proposal. That is a very short timeframe for something this significant.

I have previously said Local Water Done Well was the biggest change to local government since 1989. This will be bigger.

Amalgamation of this scale is a huge shift for the sector, and especially for small communities like ours. It could affect the services you receive, how decisions are made, and how your priorities and needs are heard.

That is why Councillors and I want to hear from you.

From next week, we are hosting public meetings across the district. We want to know what you value about the services you receive from Council, what you think could work better, who you think we should partner with in any future amalgamation, and what you believe must be prioritised.

For some people, the most important thing may be keeping local decision-making close to rural communities. For others, it may be improving Council processes, reducing costs, or strengthening our regional influence.

There may also be an expectation that bigger councils automatically mean lower rates. Let me be clear: bigger does not always mean cheaper especially in the short term. Where cost savings are proposed, communities also need to understand the trade-offs. Often, those trade-offs are changes to the services people currently receive.

If you can come along to one of our public meetings, please do. If you cannot make it, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I will make time to meet with anyone across the district who wishes to have a say on this.

The timeframe is far shorter than I would have liked, and the process is not what many of us would have hoped for. But the Government's direction is clear, and we need to be practical.

Whatever local government looks like in the future, Rangitikei needs to have a seat at the table.

To arrange a time to meet, please contact info@rangitikei.govt.nz.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Pull up a chair and have a chat with Mayor Andy and your Councillors.

Location	Venue	Date	Time
Huntermville	The Argyle (restaurant side room)	Wednesday 3 June	4:45-5:30pm
ONLINE MEETING	Facebook Live Stream	Thursday 4 June	6:30-7:30pm
Rātana	ICT Hub	Tuesday 9 June	5:45-6:30pm
Taihape	Kokako St Hall	Wednesday 10 June	4:45-5:30pm
Turakina	St Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Thursday 11 June	6:15-7pm
Marion	RSA and Citizens' Marton Memorial Hall (also live streamed to Facebook)	Tuesday 16 June	6-7pm
Bulls	Te Matapihi - Bulls Community Centre (Town Hall)	Wednesday 17 June	5:15-6pm

SIMPLIFYING LOCAL GOVERNMENT TIMELINE

1 JUNE 2026 - Community feedback opens.

5PM, 22 JUNE 2026 - Community feedback closes.

9 AUGUST 2026 - Head start proposals are due.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND IS CHANGING.

Rangitikei may have a chance to help shape what comes next, or we wait for a later Government-led process.

But before Council decides what path to take, we want to hear from you.

Rangitikei is a large rural district with a small population.

What works for a city or a larger urban area may not automatically work here. Our district needs a strong voice in any amalgamation conversation because decisions could affect:

- **Your local services** – including roads, parks, pools and community facilities.
- **How Rangitikei plans for the future** – including town development, our economy, housing and civil defence.
- **How Rangitikei is represented** – including how much local voice our communities have in decision-making, and how easy it is for residents and ratepayers to speak with decision-makers.

That is why being "at the table" matters.

We want to know what local decision-making means to you.

- Do you value having elected representatives advocating for the needs of your town or ward?
- Or would you be comfortable with representation at a wider district level?

WHERE THINGS ARE AT

Council is looking at the Government's Head Start pathway, but no decisions have been made about whether to support or join a proposal.

We are talking with other councils in the Horizons Region to understand our options, but our priority is to understand Rangitikei interests first, so we can make sure they are clearly understood in any future amalgamation conversations.

WHAT IS THE HEAD START PATHWAY?

The Government has introduced a "Head Start" pathway for councils that want to amalgamate and form larger unitary authorities.

Councils that want to take part must submit a proposal for the new, larger entity by Sunday 9 August 2026.

Final decisions are expected in 2027, with any changes expected to be in place by the **2028 local elections**.

Councils that do not take part in the Head Start pathway will be included in a compulsory "backstop process". There is limited information about what the backstop process looks like, but the indication is that the Government would step in and decide how councils are amalgamated.

We want to know whether you think Rangitikei should take part in the Head Start pathway, or wait for the backstop process.

WHAT IS A UNITARY AUTHORITY?

Right now, many parts of Aotearoa have **two layers** of local government:

LAYER ONE: A district or city council, which looks after local roads, community facilities, libraries, parks, building consents, waste, and other local services.

LAYER TWO: A regional council, which covers multiple districts/cities and looks after regional transport, river management, flood protection, environmental monitoring, and regional planning.

A unitary authority combines those roles into one council. It could mean:

- One council instead of two layers of local government.
- Fewer councils overall.

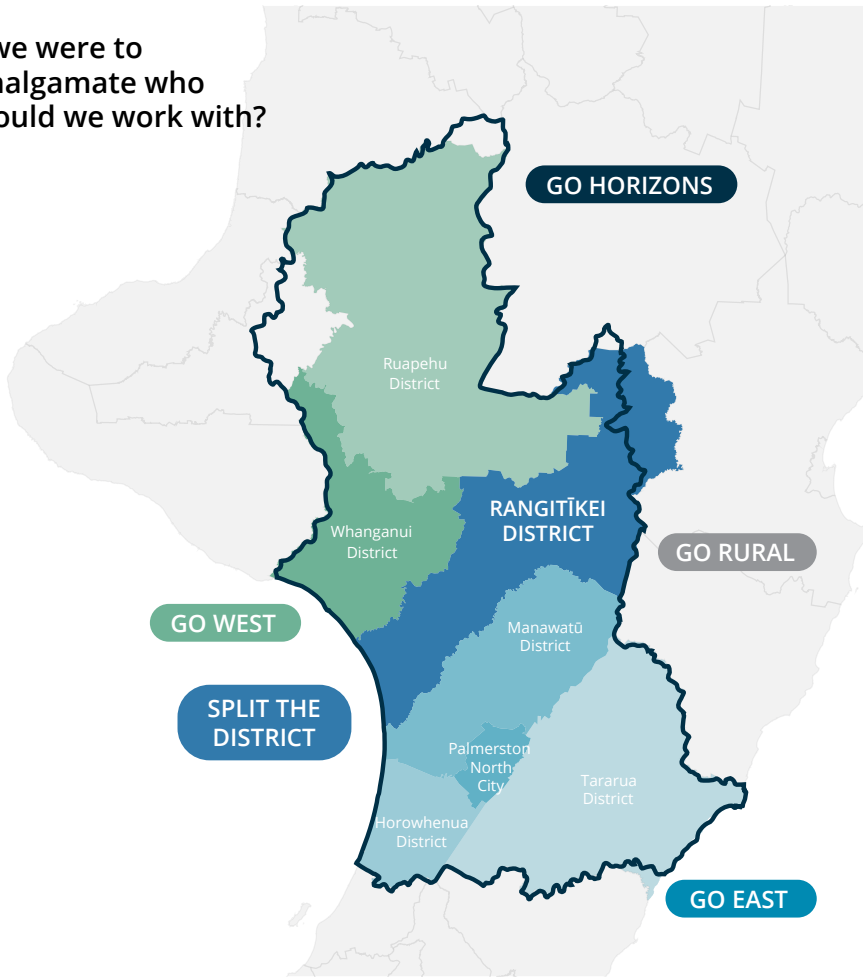
We want to know whether you think a unitary structure would work for Rangitikei, and if so;

- How big should it be?
- Who should we partner with?

Decisions about us should be made with us.



If we were to amalgamate who should we work with?



HOW ARE OTHER COUNCILS RESPONDING?

Councils around the country are responding to the Head Start pathway in different ways.

Some are moving quickly to understand whether they should be part of a Head Start proposal. Some, like us, are starting community conversations. Others are standing firm and pushing back on the Government due to the short timeframe and the risk of rushed decisions.

The common theme is that all councils are trying to understand two things at once:

1. What the Government's reform pathways require,
2. What their communities value, want protected, and want changed.

Council will use your feedback to decide whether we submit a proposal for early amalgamation with the Head Start pathway, and if so, what that proposal should be.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

Complete this form and return to one of our community hubs or our head office.

Scan the QR code to complete our online survey.

Provide feedback to your local Councillor.

Email us at info@rangitikei.govt.nz



KŌRERO MAI - HAVE YOUR SAY

This is your chance to help shape the position Rangitikei takes. Because decisions about us should be made with us.

→ Return this form to one of our community hubs or our head office.

QUESTION 1.

Where do you live?

QUESTION 2.

Which town(s) or area(s) do you most commonly travel to for shopping, healthcare, schooling, and other regular services?

QUESTION 3.

Should Council put together a proposal for amalgamation?

- Yes** - put together a 'head start' proposal
- No** - wait for the government-led 'backstop' process
- Other** - (please specify)

QUESTION 4.

If we were to amalgamate who should we work with? (Select one)

- All councils in the Horizons Region** (Manawatū, Ruapehu, Whanganui, Palmerston North, Horowhenua, Tararua).
- Go East** (e.g. Manawatū, Horowhenua, Palmerston North, Tararua)
- Go West** (e.g. Whanganui, Ruapehu)
- Split the District** (e.g. part(s) to East, part(s) West*)
- Go Rural** (e.g. join with other small councils in the region)

or something else: (please specify)

**At this stage the Government is saying that splitting districts is not an option.*

QUESTION 5.

When thinking about the possibility of amalgamation, what are your biggest concerns?

QUESTION 6.

What level of local representation matters to you?

When decisions are made about council services, places, and priorities, what matters most to you? (Please choose one).

- A representative for my town or local area** (i.e. Someone specifically representing Taihape, Marton, Bulls, Hunterville, Rātana, Koitiata etc.)
- A representative for my ward or a section of Rangitikei District** (i.e. Someone representing multiple communities within Rangitikei such as the Southern Ward)
- One or more representatives for the whole Rangitikei District** (in this instance, Rangitikei would have elected members who represent the district as a whole, rather than specific towns or wards).
- I would be comfortable being represented as part of a larger sub-regional grouping** (Representation shared across a much bigger council area, not specifically focused on Rangitikei - an example could be representatives who advocate for the interests of both Rangitikei and Ruapehu).
- I'm not sure yet.**

KEEP IN TOUCH

Feedback is anonymous. However, if you would like to receive updates about this reform, please add your name and email address.

Name

Email

The information you provide will be held by Rangitikei District Council for the purpose of the Council's Simplifying Local Government proposal only.



ASK A QUESTION FOR OUR FACEBOOK LIVE!

We want to know from you what questions you have about the Government's proposed amalgamation of councils in New Zealand.

