

Mayor's Report on LGNZ Conference – 20-22 July 2022

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1. I was sent an email (attached) relating to a media article which reported that LGNZ had banned from Conference several people relating to the Taxpayer's Union because of opposition to Three Waters, including a sitting City Councillor. I am well aware that what has been reported may well either be incorrect or there may have been other very valid reasons for LGNZ's position. But in the interests of democracy and the need to be challenged as quoted in the article, I would ask that Council give consideration to me writing to the President of LGNZ seeking an explanation.
2. Fluoridation – I have noted that 6 Local Authorities have now been ordered by the Ministry of Health over the last few days to add fluoride to their potable water supplies as reported in this morning's Dominion. I have spoken to some of the Mayors this morning and they have been sent letters signalling that change. This effectively signals that it will be a national direction throughout NZ and taken up presumably by the Water Entities. The question is why 6? As I understand it Christchurch City for example, which doesn't fluoridate, has not been asked to do so because of the huge costs they would be facing so it would seem as though we are being picked off one by one.
3. Conference was hosted very well by Palmerston North City last week. I will comment only on the principal addresses however I will start with congratulations to the Tutaenui Restoration Volunteers working on the B&C Dams and Walkways lead by Greg Carlyon, Maree Gurney, David Smith, Brendon Williams and many others. At Conference last week we had entered into an environmental excellence award process where this work gained recognition with a distinction award.

**Significant sessions –**

The Presidential LGNZ address given by **Stuart Crosby** signalled sector concerns around the number of Government reforms and the pace of change. The common theme was the pressure on Local Government with the need for local input for sector lead reforms for Three Waters, RMA Reform and the Future for Local Government. Stuart raised concerns around the turnover of Mayors and Councils at the Local Government elections that will result in a huge loss of knowledge within the sector. He stressed the need to work with Mana Whenua rather than it being a tick box exercise and also LGNZ will need to focus on new elected membership training as "being an elected member is a profession".

His address to me seemed fairly flat in delivery with no unexpected references, in other words we knew that was the position of LCNZ for quite some time and they are under exactly the same pressures as we are within the sector.

**Bonita Bingham – Chair of Taumata Arowai** – Bonita spoke really well and included a mihi to all Councils that adopted Maori Wards, making reference the 50 new Maori Wards to be welcomed in the October elections. She also thanked Government for recognising Matariki.

Bonita also gave an apology to Minister Mahuta for the comments that she is faced with via social media. Bonita said that we as a country, irrespective of our views, “need to behave in a mana enhancing way”, and I fully endorse that comment.

**Government’s Address – Prime Minister Jacinda Adern** – the Prime Minister, as expected, made a series of comments firstly acknowledging the role and workload of Local Government especially in the light of covid experiences. She said “it is getting tougher to be the public face of Local Government and fronting the challenges”.

The Prime Minister said that as a country there is cause for hope and optimism which included references to the recently signed Trade Agreements and opening of international borders. My comment is that any Trade Free Agreement helps us as a trade partner however the red meat industry on which we base our principle GDP has not been well reflected, while other sectors like honey, wine and kiwifruit industries have done well.

She praised Minister Mahuta for her work on reforms saying that all reforms are long needed and will continue at pace. She stated “the status quo is not an option for anyone. Not to proceed with the reforms would lead to unaffordability for ratepayers, and in some cases ratepayers would face an additional \$9,000 per year”. The Prime Minister praised the working parties associated with Local Government and accepted most of their recommendations have been accepted as part of the reforms. Government will also assist with a further \$44m announcement to help with Three Waters transition.

The Prime Minister increased the budget for the Mayoral Taskforce for Jobs working group, nearly reinstating all of the funding that had been withdrawn. One of things that was interesting in her address was she made reference to the Three Waters bill including a statement that direct shareholders (of which technically our Council would be one) would be able to make appointments to entity boards - something at the moment that I would struggle to see the mechanism for.

Our Council submissions to the Three Waters legislations is available on our Council website and I would ask the community to look at that.

The Prime Minister and Government is under pressure and her comment if I heard it correctly was that there will not be another major reform lead by this Government while she fronts it unless agreed to by Local Government - an indication of that pressure.

Like Minister Mahuta the Prime Minister made refer to social media and the significant pressure by saying “public sector work by Local Government needs to be safe while still needing to be available to the people”. Finally, the Prime Minister said she is looking forward to seeing the progress being made on the Future for Local Government reform and has extended the timeframe at the request of the sector.

The first keynote speaker was **Mellissa Clarke-Reynolds** who opened her presentation by making references to famous people in the past who have recorded quotes such as in 1997 there was a quote “there is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home”.

What she was trying to say was we have no idea of the future. However she did point out that if you look at the age composition of NZ where the Maori population has huge numbers of young people and relatively smaller numbers in the older brackets, this is the exact opposite to the profile for the European community. She called for us to be architects of the future, not victims and the need to strive to leave a legacy. I am sure that one of the other attending Councillors may well want to add their thoughts with regards this presentation. I take this moment to acknowledge and thank Councillors Panapa, Dalgety and Duncan for their attendance at Conference.

I will move on now to the **National Party** position. It was noted at Conference that Christopher Luxon was appearing on Zoom to present and introduce the National Party spokesperson. Interesting that subsequently it would seem as though he was out of the country at the time. **Simon Watts** the National Party spokesperson for Local Government opened with a series of comments really saying that they believe in localism, you know your communities best and Local Government and Central Government has to be a partnership. He said that they will repeal the Three Waters and will take into consideration your voice. He said the model can be improved and indicated that change is still necessary. He said that solutions to our problems don't necessarily lie in Wellington and that we are connected with you – all expected stuff. He said that his background was in international finance and believed Three Waters reorganisation could still be at a local level with supporting financial structures. He quoted that one size will never fit all. He supports the Campaign for Local Democracy in terms of trying to put forward alternative suggestions.

National opposes co-governorship of public services and says that Central Government should only step in when Local Government has not delivered i.e. the position is a last resort. With regard to Three Waters areas with small rating bases (presumably referring to small rural Councils) they will face challenges and may need help. He said that National will not support any privatisation of these assets, which is a given from everyone.

There were a number of other presentations from Young Elected Members, Iwi, Environmental Panel Groups and the need to recognise Te Mana o Te Wai.

One of the next key speakers over the three days was an address given by the **Hon. David Parker** Minister for the Environment with regard to climate change. He reiterated a broad acknowledgement that the RMA reform is needed, that it currently takes too long and costs too much and that the cost of consenting for land issues has risen 150% over the last 10 years. He said we as a Government they are committed to reform in these terms and referenced the Tony Randerson report. He said with the RMA reform there will be a reduction in the number of consents with a set of accepting standards and national planning framework and Local Government will be key in this partnership. He said there will be no co-governorship but they will work with Iwi and went on to say that Regional Committees will be autonomous in their decision making and that local regions will make decisions around who will sit on the regional bodies. He stated a minimum number of 6 of which at least 2 must be Maori. He suggested there will be a host Council to provide administration support within the new legislation and regional entities. The Minister acknowledged the Local Government steering group has been absolutely invaluable in strongly voicing their desire for the local voice to be upheld. He said that consent monitoring and compliance will still sit within Councils. He also said the regional

planning committees which will release their plan can only be challenged under quantum law. My read of his presentation was that yes he firmly wants to engage with the sector, that he is committed to the reform but is absolutely prepared to listen to the local voice and that he presented very very well.

**Susan Freeman-Greene** Chief Executive of LGNZ thanked and acknowledged the organisers of Conference, Grant Smith and Palmerston North City, as is appropriate. Susan went onto say that at the moment we have uncertainty with no knowledge of the political/social environment we are operating in. We are dealing with a seismic shift to the status quo with a clear reference to the three yearly election cycle of Local Government. She reiterated that we were all here at Conference because we are interested, that none of us can do it alone and we need to work together.

The **Hon. Nanaia Mahuta** started with a series of acknowledgements to Iwi, especially to Rangitane who had a high involvement throughout the Conference, and said she's throwing away the notes the DIA had provided for her to speak to and wanted to speak from the heart. She thanked the retiring Councillors and Mayors for their service acknowledging certainly these are difficult times. She also acknowledged response in terms of support from Iwi and Councils around covid with the health and social needs and acknowledged a number of Mayors who had to leave the Conference because of civil defence issues. She accepted that Local Government is anxious about the scale of reform and needs to work alongside cabinet. The key message was that if we slow down now nothing will happen for at least a number of years in response to the number of questions around the request to delay the process.

## Andy Watson

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**From:** Robin Cameron <robinbob@inspire.net.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 20 July 2022 9:54 pm  
**To:** Peter Beggs; Andy Watson; Cr Nigel Belsham; Cath Ash; Fi Dalgety; Richard Lambert; Dave Wilson; Gill Duncan; Angus Gordon; Tracey Hiroa; Coral Raukawa; Brian Carter; Waru Panapa  
**Subject:** LGNZ bans New Zealand's largest ratepayers' group from conference

<https://mailchi.mp/0bfabdb037f6/another-41m-for-the-media-will-this-affect-election-coverage-990147>

Here it is in full:

**20 JULY 2022  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **LGNZ bans New Zealand's largest ratepayers' group from conference**

Fewer than 24 hours before the opening of the Local Government New Zealand conference in Palmerston North, the Taxpayers' Union was notified by LGNZ that the Union's registration to attend the event has been revoked and that all union members, staff and board members are banned from attending the conference on 'the future of local government'.

With sponsors including Kāinga Ora, Department of Internal Affairs, Waka Kotahi, Ministry for the Environment, and the Ministry of Transport, according to President of LGNZ Stuart Crosby the conference will focus on what the future of local government looks like.

"Despite 'the future of local government' featuring on the agenda of the LGNZ conference as quoted on the conference website, LGNZ has informed us that our organisation's criticism of the taxpayer-funded body disqualifies the Taxpayers' Union from even listening to these vital discussions," said Union spokesman Jordan Williams.

"They have no sense of irony. LGNZ is banning the largest ratepayers' group in the country from the discussions on the future of democracy because we don't agree with LGNZ on these matters. It seems LGNZ are pro-democracy, but only if you agree with them."

"It is very clear that this is a political decision. In the conversations with our staff, LGNZ cited our opposition to Three Waters as among the reasons. Either LGNZ has been leaned on by the Minister Mahuta's office, or they themselves have turned into a blatantly political organisation."

"With 180,000 subscribed supporters, the Taxpayers' Union is the largest ratepayer group by a country mile. Allowing stakeholder groups to attend should not be contingent on holding the same views LGNZ and the Minister."

"There are obvious questions to be answered around whether the Minister's office had any involvement in this decision. We note the LGNZ official who notified us of the decision is a recent Ministerial staffer. Given the many

criticisms of Stuart Crosby selling out to the Government, this looks like yet another corruption of LGNZ's purported mission to promote democracy."

"Astoundingly, when we put to LGNZ that the revoking of our registration was 'utu' for past criticisms, the LGNZ representative conceded that it was!"

"This is the first time I've been banned from anything," said Mr Williams. "But it's not just me - LGNZ has said it applies to our nine staff, the board members, and even our members!"

Taxpayers' Union board member (also a sitting City Councillor) Chis Milne - banned from attending in any Taxpayers' Union capacity.

- Former Minister of Finance, Hon Ruth Richardson – banned.
- Former Broadcaster, Peter Williams - banned.
- Political commentator, David Farrar - banned.
- The Union's affiliated groups, the Auckland Ratepayers' Alliance and Tauranga Ratepayers' Alliance - banned.

"Those public sector agencies sponsoring LGNZ need to question why they are funding such blatant politicisation of public money. How can a conference on local democracy be credible, when the democracy only extends to the groups that agree with the views of the LGNZ and the Government?"

LGNZ's president confirmed to the Taxpayers' Union that no other group has been banned, and that no other ratepayer groups are attending. Not even one.

The conference event webpage states:

"Approximately 600 delegates are expected to attend, such as mayors, chairs, chief executives, councillors and senior management from New Zealand's councils, along with key players from the private sector, business, government and non government agencies."

The event's website quotes LGNZ President Stuart Crosby saying:

"Te Wā Heke Mai will host local government movers and shakers, influencers, and visionaries alongside outstanding local and international speakers. There will be an opportunity to listen and learn, connect and network, challenge and be challenged."

ENDS

ENQUIRIES:

Jordan Williams  
021 762 542

TO MAYOR, COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE of Rangitikei District Council

It is truly amazing to see the depths to which the LGNZ has sunk – to being a totally corrupt organisation which does not stand for the protection and support of the ratepayers and taxpayers who are paying all their extravagant costs! (\$1500 a ticket to attend this 3-day conference being held at present in

Palmerston North!) LGNZ - an organisation which bans a recognised and stalwart organisation which exists for the exposure of rorts and stands for protection of New Zealand tax payers. What a travesty this LGNZ is, and I foretell that time will soon be coming that there will be a major uproar against local government – the LGNZ AND local councils, mayors and chief executives who should know much better, who do not have the guts to stand up to corruption and display the needed principles of fairness and truth to their supporters – the Rangitikei rate payers. Rangitikei District Council needs to remove themselves from this corrupt organisation with haste and Stuart Crosby should receive a vote of NO CONFIDENCE from Rangitikei District Council. If you continue to support Three Waters and the LGNZ, you are traitors to your ratepayers.

A continued connection with LGNZ will cost Rangitikei District Council council severely. Your reputation is already shaky. Your officers are in disrepute. Remove yourselves from Local Government New Zealand NOW.

Regards

Robin Cameron

