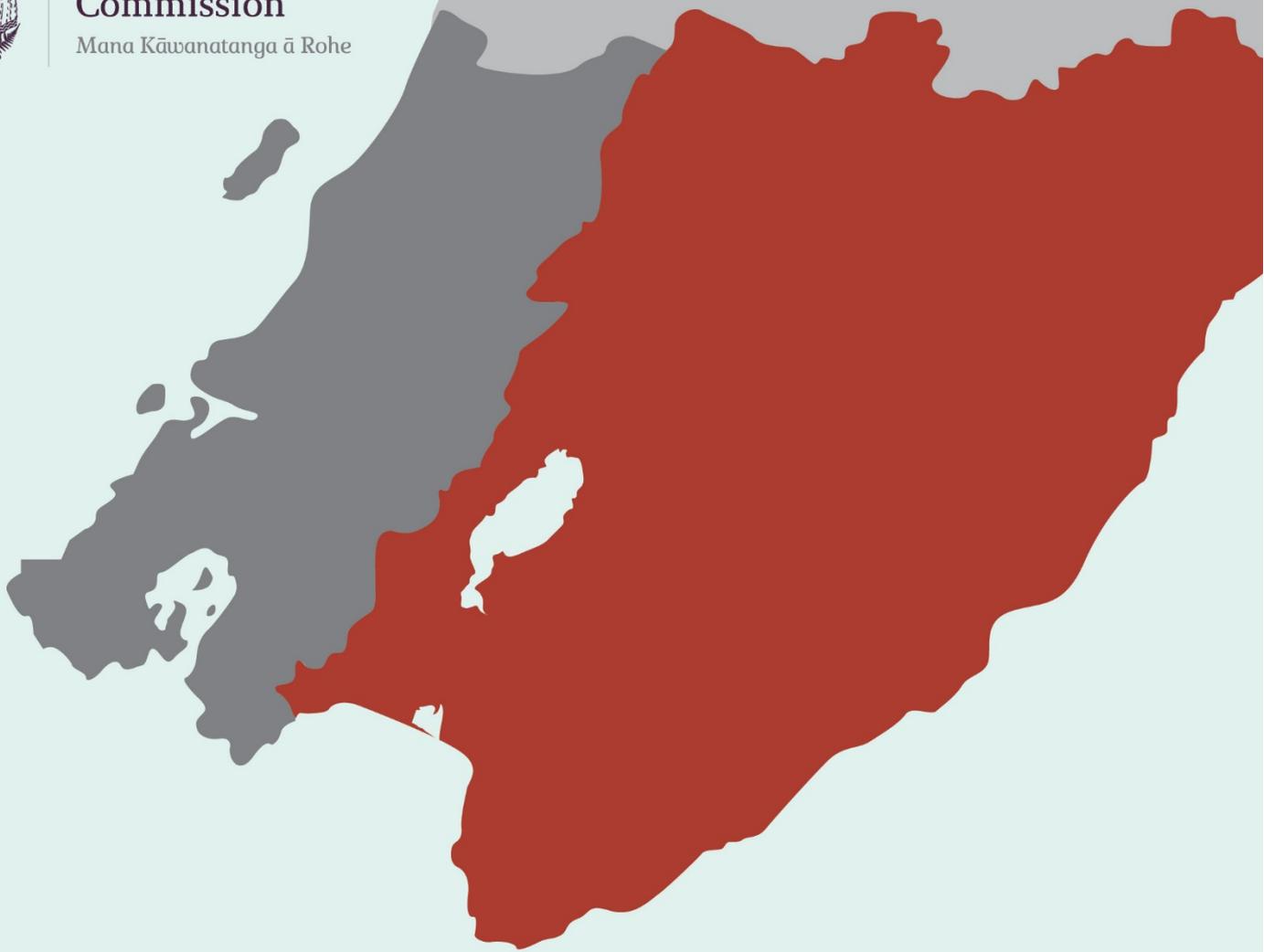




Local Government  
Commission

Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe



# Summary of submissions

Draft Proposal for Wairarapa District Council

Wairarapa  
District Council

JULY 2017

[www.lgc.govt.nz](http://www.lgc.govt.nz)

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# Executive Summary

On 15 March 2017, the Local Government Commission published its draft proposal for a Wairarapa District Council combining the South Wairarapa District Council, the Carterton District Council and the Masterton District Council. The Commission invited submissions on the draft proposal with a closing date of 3 May 2017.

A total of 1191 submissions were received.

## *Submissions overview*

Overall, 824 submissions opposed the draft proposal, 356 supported it or supported it with some amendments, and 11 neither supported nor opposed it.

The majority of responses (583) were completed using the online submission form. In addition, 538 others submitted posted or emailed versions on the written submission form provided by the Commission. A further 26 submissions were substantive written submissions. The remainder were short-form emailed submissions.

## *Submissions by district*

Submissions from the South Wairarapa and Carterton districts were high relative to their respective shares of the Wairarapa population. The South Wairarapa District has 23 per cent of the population and had 32 per cent of the respondents. The Carterton District comprises 20 per cent of the region's population and accounted for 40 per cent of the submissions. The Masterton District, which has 56 per cent of the population, accounted for only 27 per cent of total respondents.

In South Wairarapa, most submitters (269 out of 363, or 74 per cent) opposed the draft proposal. In Carterton, most submitters (390 out of 461, or 85 per cent) were in opposition to the draft proposal. In Masterton, however, the majority of submitters (168 out of 304, or 55 per cent) were in support of the draft proposal.

## *Submissions by organisation*

Some 36 submissions were identified as from organisations, including affected councils and iwi. Of these, 17 (47 per cent) supported the draft proposal, some with amendments, 11 (31 per cent) were opposed, and eight (22 per cent) neither opposed nor supported it. Several of these organisations represent large numbers of people: for example, the Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce has a membership of around 200; Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa represents up to 7000 people and Rangitāne about 3000. There has been no attempt to take account of this by weighting the views of membership organisations against those of individual submitters.

### ***Reasons for support***

The main reason given by those people supporting the proposal was that it would create a stronger mandate for the council to advocate for the Wairarapa as a whole (89 per cent); 68 per cent identified there being only one council to deal with as important; 62 and 60 per cent respectively were for council staff being spread less thinly, and a new council having a stronger financial base.

### ***Reasons for opposing***

The main reason given by people opposed to the proposal was that they were happy with their council as it is (71 per cent); 60 per cent said there was no reason to change; 52 per cent said there were other ways to improve efficiency under the current model.

### ***Submissions one input into decision-making***

The submissions process, while valuable, does not and would not be expected to offer a full picture of community views. This summary of submissions presents the raw data, along with an outline of submitters' reasons for their stance, and verbatim comments. It cannot be extrapolated into a definitive Wairarapa-wide determination of the community's view because there has been no attempt here to provide weighted statistical significance, or to take account of organisation membership in arriving at support for, or opposition to, the draft proposal.

Rather it is one input into the range of information and analyses to be considered by the Commission in deciding its next steps.

Other inputs to the next steps include an independent telephone survey, previous public engagement programmes, professional analyses by consultants using agreed base information, the Commission's own investigations, and communities of interest considerations.

# Introduction

## *Publicising the draft proposal and inviting submissions*

On 15 March 2017, the Local Government Commission (the Commission) published its draft proposal for a Wairarapa District Council combining the South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC), the Carterton District Council (CDC) and the Masterton District Council (MDC). The Commission invited submissions on the draft proposal with a closing date of 3 May 2017.

A total of 1191 submissions were received.

## *Making submissions*

The Commission publicised in its advertising, on its website, and in published articles the ways in which people could choose to make a submission. These included:

- Filling in a printed Freepost submission form
- Downloading the submission form from the Commission's website and posting or emailing it to the Commission
- Completing an online (Survey Monkey) submission form
- Writing an individual submission in the format of the submitter's choice and posting or emailing to the Commission

## *Submissions received*

The Commission received 1191 submissions. Of these, about 538 were on submission forms, 583 were completed online and 26 were longer-form written submissions. Most of the latter were on behalf of groups or organisations. The remainder were short-form submissions sent by email to the Commission.

Fifty-five submitters made additional verbal submissions before Commissioners at a series of five hearings held between 23 May and 6 June 2017.

## *Structure of this document*

This document is a description and summary of the submissions. The first section provides some data around responses to the submission form questions, including an overview by district council area. The next part of this document is a summary of submissions, including those from councils and council-related organisations, iwi organisations, and other organisations.

Submissions are then summarised according to topic area. This follows the same format and order as the draft proposal document itself. Finally, this summary includes discussion of additional topics raised in submissions.

# 1 – Summary of submissions

The submission form asked people to answer a number of questions:

- Question 1: Do you support or oppose the draft proposal? (choose only one)
- Question 2: If you support the draft proposal, what are your main reasons for doing so? Tick as many as apply and/or add your own reasons below
- Question 3: If you oppose the draft proposal, what are your main reasons for doing so? Tick as many as apply and/or add your own reasons below

The submission form also included space for any additional comments and for respondents to tell us their:

- Name
- Organisation (if applicable)
- Email address
- Residential or postal address, including what part of the Wairarapa they live or pay rates in.

A total of 1191 submissions were received by the Local Government Commission (the Commission) and are included in the summary below.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Do you support or oppose the draft proposal?

Submitters could select one of the following options:

- Support the draft proposal
- Support the draft proposal but with some amendments
- Oppose the draft proposal
- Oppose the draft proposal but want some other form of local government change.

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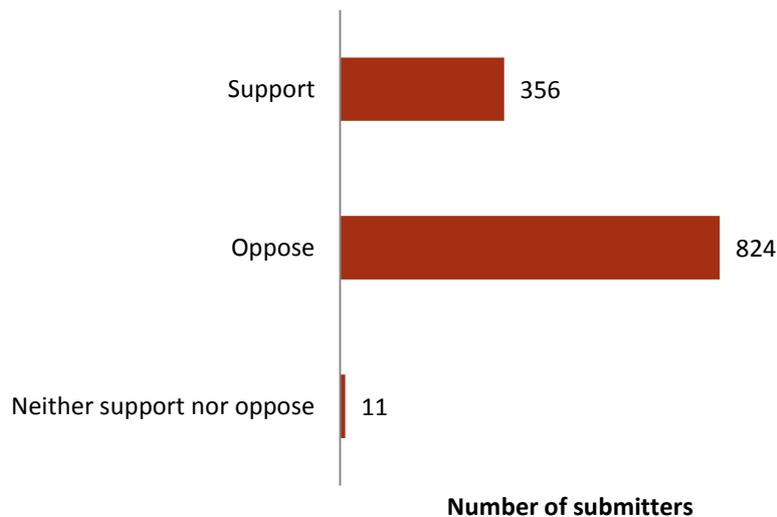
<sup>1</sup> In addition to the 1191 submissions, the Commission received 10 written submissions that could not be included in the total. The main reason for this was that the submission forms were incomplete. Some did not include any individual identifying information such as a name or address. Others did include these details but had not provided any other information such as whether or not they supported or opposed the draft proposal.

In addition, two late written submissions were received well after the closing date of 3 May. These have not been included in this summary.

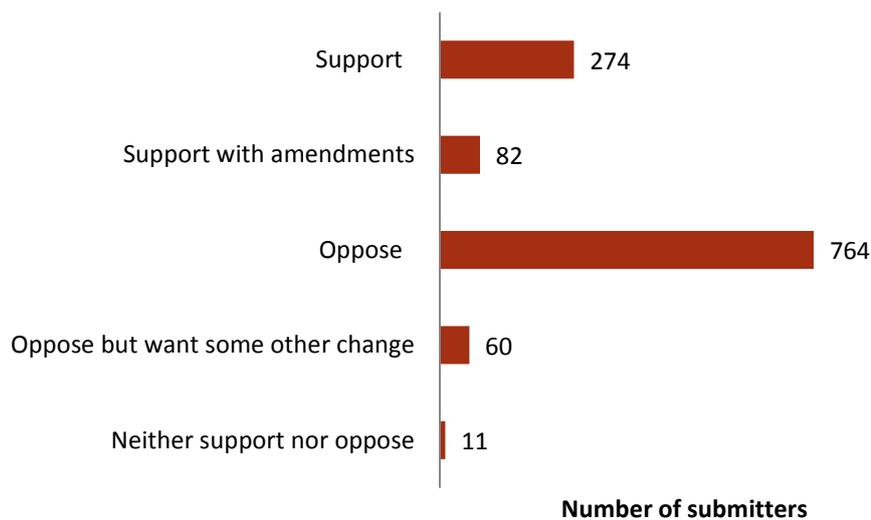
When we analysed the submissions we found there were also a small number of longer-form submissions that specifically stated they neither supported nor opposed the draft proposal. We classified those accordingly.

Overall, a majority of submitters opposed the draft proposal – 824 (69 per cent) indicating they opposed the draft proposal, and 356 (30 per cent) indicating they either supported the proposal, or supported it with some amendments. A total of 11 respondents (or one per cent) stated they did not either support or oppose the draft proposal. This is shown in graph 1 below. A more detailed breakdown is included in graph 1A.

**Graph 1: Overall results for question 1 – Do you support or oppose the draft proposal?**



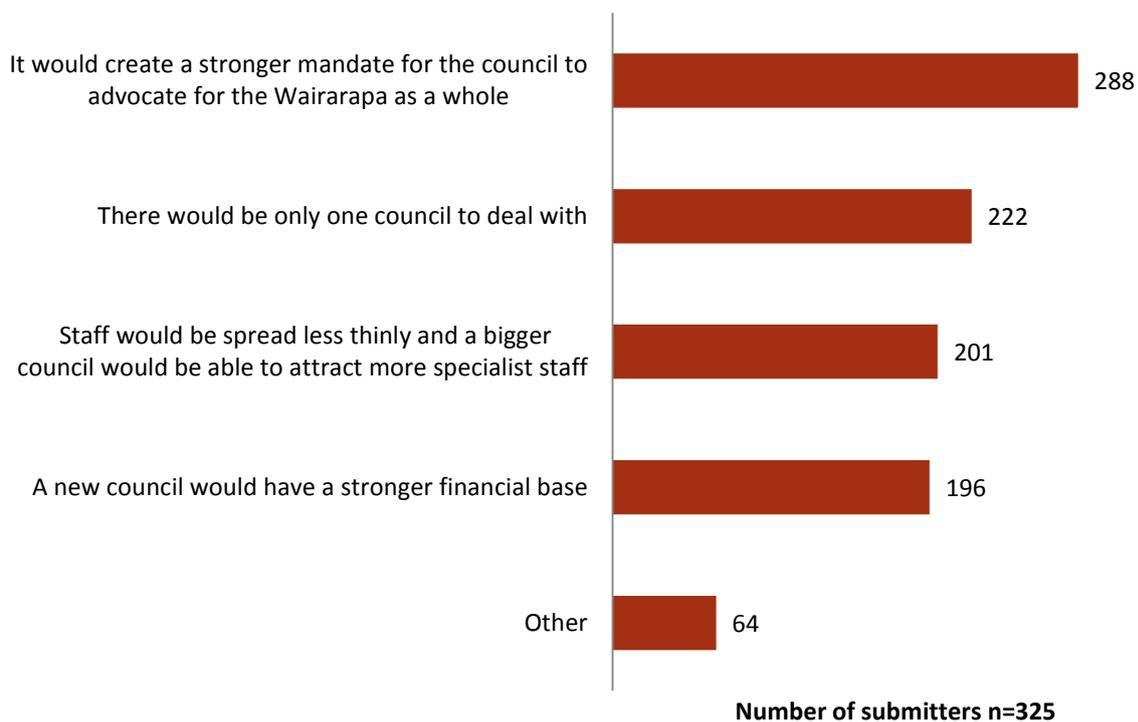
**Graph 1A: Detailed results for question 1 – Do you support or oppose the draft proposal?**



## 1.2 If you support the draft proposal, what are your main reasons for doing so?

The submission form asked those who supported the draft proposal to indicate why they did so. There was a list of suggestions, and people could also add their own reasons. Respondents could tick as many of those options as they wished.

**Graph 2: Overall results for question 2- If you support the draft proposal, what are your main reasons for doing so?**



Of the 325 people who answered question 2, the most common reason given for supporting the draft proposal was “it would create a stronger mandate for the council to advocate for the Wairarapa as a whole”. Eighty-nine per cent of these respondents (288) gave this as one of their reasons.

Similar numbers of these respondents stated that their reasons for supporting the draft proposal were “there would be only one council to deal with” (222 submissions, or 68 per cent), “staff would be spread less thinly and a bigger council will be able to attract more specialist staff” (201 submissions, or 62 per cent), or “the new council would have a stronger financial base” (196 submissions, or 60 per cent).

A number of respondents (64) indicated that they had “other” reasons for supporting the draft proposal.

### **Additional comments on question 2**

A total of 81 submitters provided additional comments on question 2. These are summarised below:

### ***It would create a stronger mandate for the council to advocate for the Wairarapa as a whole***

Approximately 17 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 2 that indicated they supported the proposal because it would create a stronger mandate for the council to advocate for the Wairarapa as a whole. For example:

- “A mayor elected at large has a political base for speaking on behalf of the wider region.” [Frank Cody]
- “Stronger and unified voice in regional and national conversations.” [Geoffrey Copps]
- “It is imperative that there be one TLA in the Wairarapa to allow the opportunity for that TLA to strongly influence Wairarapa’s future...” [Paul Crimp]
- “Having a Wairarapa-wide view of how the region can progress, to create benefits across the region.” [Jill Stringer]
- “A council representing the whole of the Wairarapa would speak with greater authority and more credibility on the national stage when seeking funding for infrastructure.” [Featherston Residents and Ratepayers Association]
- “...if all of its citizens are going to live well, comfortably and prosper they need councillors speaking with one voice to Wellington, Auckland and the rest of New Zealand.” [Peter Ladd supplementary verbal submission]

### ***There would be only one council to deal with***

Approximately 15 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 2 that indicated they supported the proposal because there would be only one council to deal with, including statements that it would be easier to do business, and council plans would be reduced. For example:

- “In our view, the triplication of local politicians and bureaucracies has held back the development of the Wairarapa ... the need for three community centres within 30 minutes driving is unnecessary given that these multimillion-dollar buildings within the Wairarapa are closer than many in large cities, duplicating functionality, purpose and facilities.” [TR and P Ward]
- “Rationalisation is critical to the future success of the Wairarapa ... duplication of resources, operational overheads, contractors etc will be removed.” [Andrew Bond]
- “I would hope that amalgamation would bring about consistency of bylaws throughout Wairarapa.” [Robyn Bain]
- “...increase consistency of interpretations of the District Plan and regulatory compliance by each council.” [Richard Winder]
- “...have one AMP for resources, one LTP, one AP, one set of personnel collecting rates etc etc.” [Dave Gittings]
- “...about having a local government model that can deliver the services the whole district needs, consistently and seamlessly wherever in the Wairarapa you choose to do business.” [Adrienne Staples supplementary verbal submission]

***Staff would be spread less thinly and a bigger council will be able to attract more specialist staff***

A small number of submitters provided additional comments on this topic. For example:

- “This proposal gives an answer to the questions around staff capacity...” [Mike Palmers supplementary verbal submission]

***A new council would have a stronger financial base***

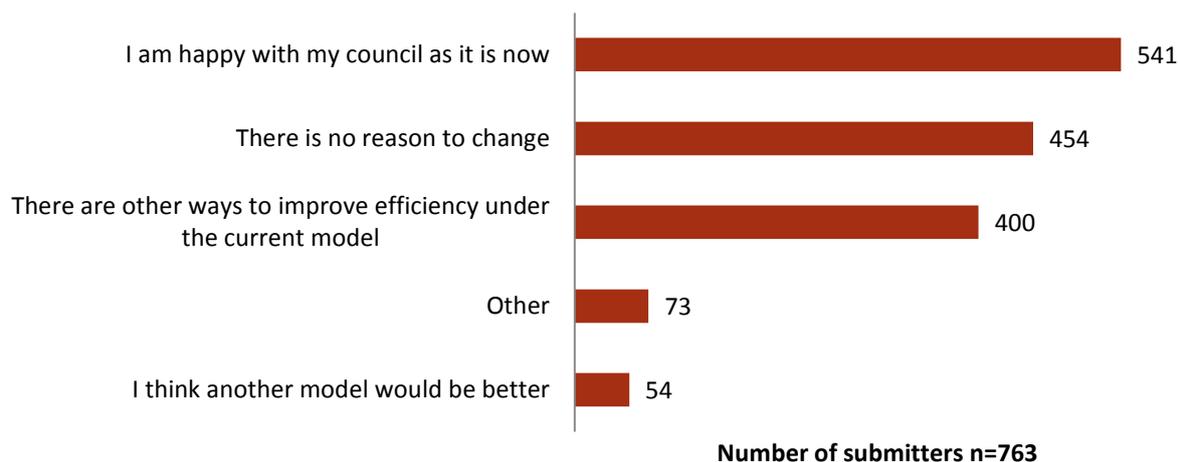
Approximately 30 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 2 that indicated they supported the proposal because a new council would have a stronger financial base, including benefitting from economies of scale. For example:

- “The financial base would stay the same but would become much better managed for the Wairarapa district as a whole.” [John Canning]
- “Economy of scale when tendering for public works etc.” [Josh Coe]

## 1.3 If you oppose the draft proposal, what are your main reasons for doing so?

The submission form asked those who opposed the draft proposal to indicate why they did so. There was a list of suggestions, and people could also add in their own reasons. Respondents could tick as many of those options as they wished.

**Graph 3: Overall results for question 3 – If you oppose the draft proposal, what are your main reasons for doing so?**



Of the 763 people who answered this question, the most common reason given for opposing the draft proposal was “I am happy with my council as it is now”. Some 71 per cent (541 submitters) gave this as one of their reasons.

Similar numbers of these respondents stated that their reasons for opposing the draft proposal were “there is no reason to change” (454 submissions, or 60 per cent), or “there are other ways to improve efficiency under the current model” (400 submissions, or 52 per cent).

A smaller number (54, or seven per cent) thought “another model would be better”.

The most frequently suggested other models were a unitary council for the whole of the Wairarapa, greater co-operation between the existing three councils, and more use of shared services.

A total of 73 submitters indicated they had “other” reasons for opposing the draft proposal.

### **Additional comments on question 3**

Some 172 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 3. These are summarised below:

### ***I am happy with my council as it is now***

About 38 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 3 that indicated they opposed the proposal because they are happy with their council as it is now. These comments covered issues such as the importance of retaining a sense of community identity, and that a combined council would be less democratic and/or too large. The majority of these submissions came from the Carterton and South Wairarapa districts. Examples include:

- “Research has found that the larger the units of local government become the greater the damage done to a range of democratic criteria, such as trust in councillors and council officers. As councils become bigger it is harder for people to identify with them” [Suzanne Galbraith]
- “South Wairarapa needs to retain its own identity and not get swallowed up in the wider district” [Trish Higginson]
- “I feel that Carterton is unique. People come here to live because of that, I believe. If we want to keep Carterton growing and bring new enthusiastic people to the area, change would be a backward step” [Maureen Ashby]
- “Now we have a local finger on the pulse; the present system is sound” [Andrew Fletcher supplementary verbal submission]

### ***There is no reason to change***

About 30 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 3 that indicated they opposed the proposal because there is no reason to change. These submitters thought that the current model works. Several expressed the sentiment “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”.

### ***There are other ways to improve efficiency under the current model***

A number of submitters also provided comments in relation to question 3 that indicated they opposed the proposal because they considered there are other ways to improve efficiency under the current model, such as shared services or improvements to the status quo. These submissions are summarised in section 5.1.

### ***I think another model would be better***

Approximately 55 submitters provided additional comments in relation to question 3 that indicated they opposed the proposal because they thought another model would be better. These submissions are summarised in section 5.1.

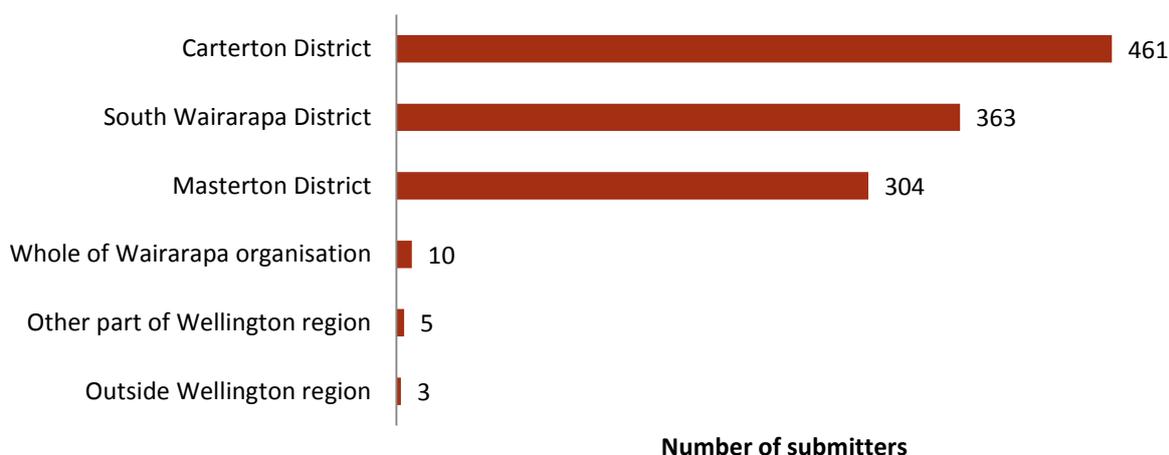
## 2 – Submissions by district

Of the three districts, the largest proportion of submissions (461) came from people who lived and/or paid rates in the Carterton District. This was followed by South Wairarapa District with 363 responses and Masterton District with 304.

Submissions were received from 10 organisations that represent cross-Wairarapa interests.

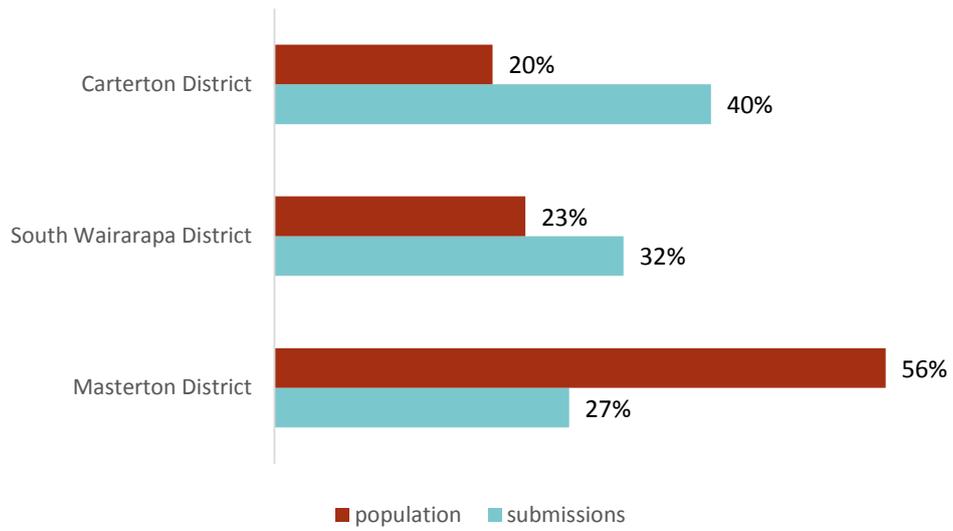
In addition, eight submitters (were from outside the Wairarapa.

**Graph 4: Overall results for question 5 – Where do you live and/or pay rates?**



Submissions from both the Carterton and South Wairarapa districts were high compared with their shares of the Wairarapa population, at 40 and 32 per cent of respondents respectively. The proportion of submissions coming from the Masterton District was low, at 27 per cent.

**Graph 4A: Comparison of population share\* and proportion of submissions from each district**

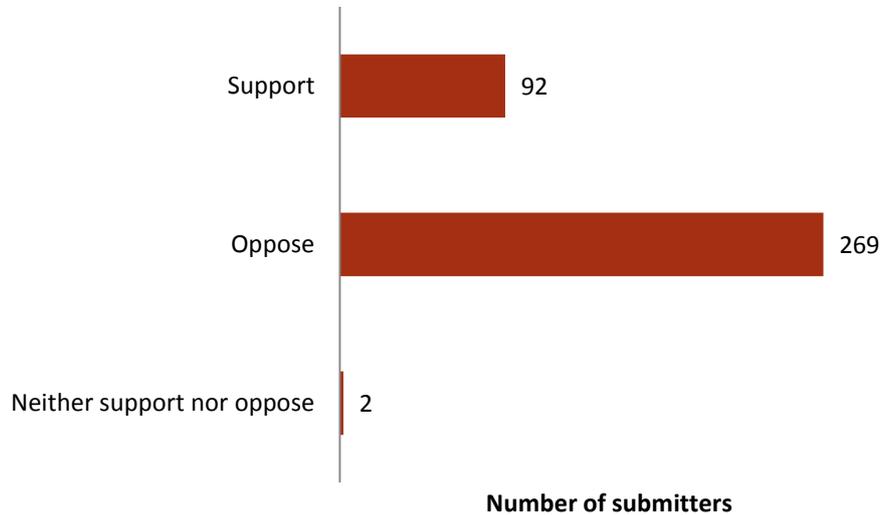


\*Based on each district's share of the total Wairarapa population, as estimated by Statistics New Zealand at 30 June 2015.

## 2.1 Submissions from the South Wairarapa District

The majority (269, or 74 per cent) of submitters from the South Wairarapa District oppose the draft proposal.

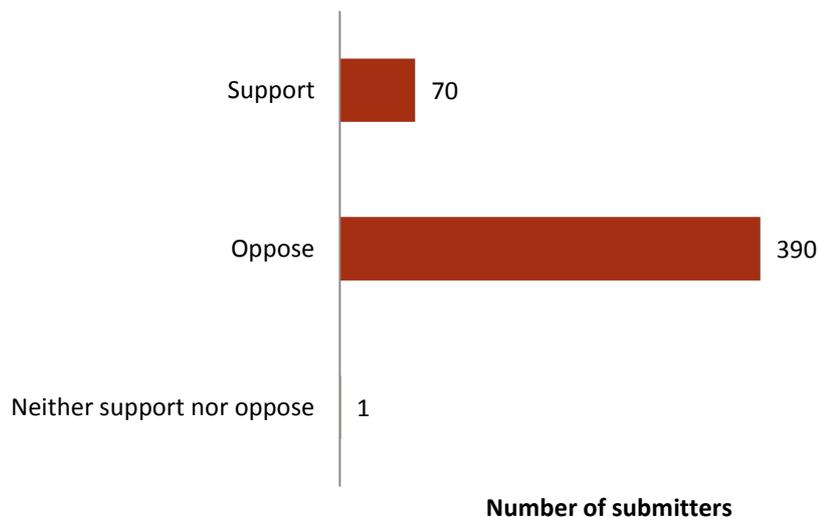
**Graph 5: South Wairarapa only – Do you support or oppose the draft proposal?**



## 2.2 Submissions from the Carterton District

The majority (390, or 85 per cent) of submitters from the Carterton District oppose the draft proposal.

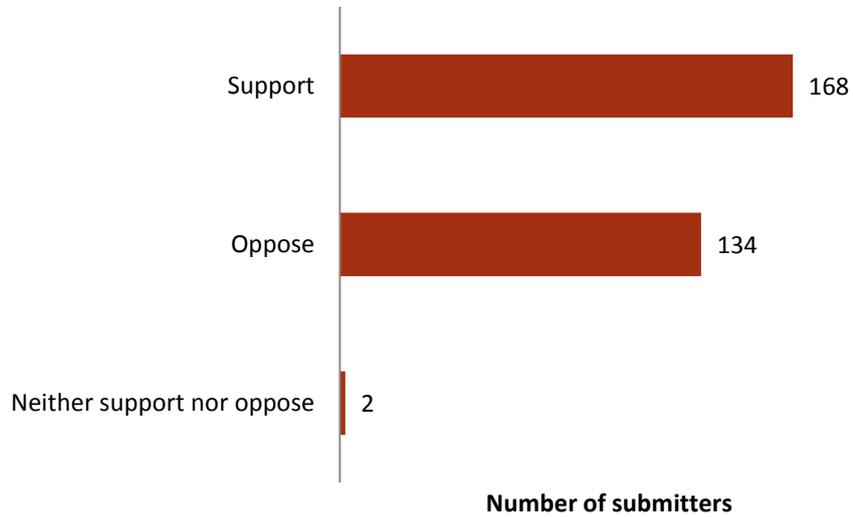
**Graph 6: Carterton only – Do you support or oppose the draft proposal?**



## 2.3 Submissions from the Masterton District

The majority (168 or 55 per cent) of submitters from the Masterton District support the draft proposal.

**Graph 7: Masterton only – Do you support or oppose the draft proposal?**



## 3 – Overview of submissions

### 3.1 Councils and council-related organisations

#### *South Wairarapa District Council*

South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC) supported a unitary authority. It had a number of concerns and points to make about the draft proposal. These included:

- The relationship with the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC)
- There being fewer councillors representing SWDC under the draft proposal
- It agrees with composition of community boards, but says they must be well-resourced and supported in order to be successful
- It supports the standing committee approach to Māori representation. However, decisions are more often made at the hapū/marae level and there is no appropriate mechanism in the draft proposal to accommodate this
- It also supported the standing committee approach to rural representation. It had concerns that urban representatives in Featherston, Greytown and Martinborough may not adequately represent rural issues in those areas
- It supported the retention of area offices – the “head office” should be in Carterton. It had concerns that Masterton interests may dominate
- It thought the new council should adjust rates across the whole of the district right from the start to remove swings and roundabouts depending on where districts are in the infrastructure asset cycle
- It believed it is important that decisions and recommendations of the Wairarapa Committee to GWRC are respected and not disregarded or delayed
- It believed the Commission should not determine who will be on the implementation team
- “More thought needs to go into transition period”
- “More consideration needs to be given to how long-term plans for existing councils will merge into proposed council plan”
- Consideration is needed about financial reserves: they should be spent where they have been earned
- It would like more details about costs and savings

At the Commission’s hearing in Martinborough on 23 May 2017, Chief Executive Paul Crimp said he considered the benefits of a larger organisation were understated in the proposal because operational resilience was becoming increasingly important. At the moment, important issues on future resilience and sustainability had to be implemented three times throughout the area, including providing cover for staff shortages or absences.

## *Carterton District Council*

Carterton District Council (CDC) did not support or oppose the proposal because “there is no consensus among councillors”. Its submission “focuses on both the proposed Wairarapa Council arrangements as well as the status quo, and identifies where these two options can be improved and strengthened”. More specifically it said:

- Generally, CDC supported the representation arrangements, including the names of the rural wards, but is concerned about the level of rural representation
- Suggested changes to the Local Electoral Act to allow two councillors per rural ward, and other options including rural community boards, and rural ward councillors being well supported
- It believed the proposal will be strengthened if there is specific provision made for each community board to have sufficient staff resources and budget allocated to enable them to operate and make decisions effectively – suggested changes to draft terms of reference were included
- The proposed Māori Standing Committee was supported. “This committee needs to be well supported by council resources”
- It supported the proposal to retain area offices in Carterton, Martinborough and Masterton, and service centres in the other towns. “Serious consideration should be given to Carterton being the principal location of the mayor’s office and council chambers (creating the ‘leadership centre’ for the district), because of its geographically central location”
- It also suggested co-location with GWRC
- CDC strongly supported the Commission’s approach to ring-fencing debt associated with wastewater treatment systems. It supported the Commission “locking-in the proposed provisions for as long as it is legally able.” It noted that new debt-funded capex may also need to be ring-fenced in this way and “we strongly support the Commission’s consideration of the treatment of new debt”
- In addition to the ring-fencing, CDC submitted that the Commission should also “adopt, in any final proposal, provisions that also limit debt and address levels of service”. Suggestions were provided
- CDC strongly supported the Wairarapa Committee that would be a standing committee of the regional council, and believed “it is a critical element in the proposal”. Suggestions for strengthening the committee were provided
- “Transition costs need to be kept to an absolute minimum.” CDC urged the Commission to encourage the transition board to “exercise fiscal prudence when making decisions and resourcing the transition”
- Should an amalgamation be confirmed, CDC-elected representatives would be actively supporting a petition to require a poll
- It would like any new council to be in place by October 2018
- It supported the proposed make-up of the transition board
- It strongly urged the Commission and the board to “set in place effective consultation mechanisms with Māori and the wider community as the transition board makes its decisions”

CDC's submission also included additional advantages and disadvantages and gave comments on an enhanced status quo:

- Wairarapa Standing Committee of GWRC should be embedded
- The three councils could do a lot more shared services than are currently being undertaken
- There is scope for the three councils, through shared services arrangements, to establish centres of excellence
- The three councils could prepare a joint strategic workforce plan that addresses succession and expertise issues, establishing opportunities to share staff resources

At the Commission hearing in Carterton on 31 May 2017, CDC stated that decisions on staff (locations etc.) should not be made by the transition body. These should be left to the new council, led by the new chief executive and management team.

### ***Masterton District Council***

Masterton District Council (MDC) supported the draft proposal, with the proviso that "...this decision is ultimately determined through a poll." It believed the advantages of the draft proposal outweighed the disadvantages, and that "the majority of residents in our district will support such an amalgamated district because they see the Wairarapa as a distinct region with consistent economic and social drivers".

MDC saw the Wairarapa as "a single labour market, a single catchment (Ruamahanga), and one community of interest".

It believed that the proposed Wairarapa District Council will:

- Provide a more cost-effective way of delivering local government services
- Allow simplification in areas such as economic development and environmental development
- Avoid duplication
- Provide the region with a stronger voice
- Assist in future-proofing the region

MDC had some concerns with, and comments on, the draft proposal, namely:

- The transition body is not fairly governed because it is not based on population: it advocated strongly for it to be population-based and "at very least is governed by two from our district and only one from each of Carterton and South Wairarapa"
- MDC elaborated on this issue at the Commission hearing in Masterton on 24 May 2017, and offered an alternative suggestion that the transition body should have more limited powers so that decisions on future structures (e.g. staff and service location) are not dominated by the other two districts
- It supported ring-fencing existing debt and reserves

- It did not believe the establishment of a Māori standing committee adequately supports Māori representation as reflected in the Treaty of Waitangi and central government legislation; it believes Māori should “have the opportunity to influence all issues facing our community and be part of decision-making, through decisions at the highest level ...”
- MDC supported the proposal for the principal office to be located in Masterton
- It supported the principle of ensuring council staff are located in numbers proportional to current staffing of each of the centres
- It supported the importance of community boards in the draft proposal and advocated for “stronger and clearer decision-making powers for community boards”

At the Commission hearing in Masterton on 24 May 2017 Chief Executive Pim Borren emphasised that the amalgamation was about future-proofing the councils, which “was very hard to communicate”. He also considered that the Commission had “undersold” the economies-of-scale advantages of the proposal by putting them at the back of the proposal document.

### ***Greater Wellington Regional Council***

GWRC stated that “regardless of the final outcome of the draft proposal, GWRC is committed to working effectively with the territorial authorities in the Wairarapa area and the local community. In this regard, GWRC recently established a Wairarapa Committee...” At the Commission hearing in Carterton on 31 May 2017, GWRC Chair Chris Laidlaw provided more details about the committee. He stated that its broad mandate includes transport, flood protection, and environmental management. He also stated that GWRC would still maintain the committee even if the draft proposal process did not proceed.

GWRC had two matters it would like to see clarified in regard to the proposed Wairarapa Committee of GWRC (and provided recommended text):

- Clause 40 of the draft proposal blurs the responsibility of GWRC's officers for providing advisory support to the committee
- Clause 36 should be reworked to better reflect the scope of GWRC's activities and be amended to make it clear that GWRC will be responsible for specifying the committee's terms of reference

### ***Wellington Water Committee***

The Wellington Water Committee<sup>2</sup> considered the proposal from a “three waters perspective” and consulted the three Wairarapa councils involved. Its submission “promotes increased collaboration across the wider region” and included:

- Anticipating discussions about how shared interests could be advanced in the three waters space, including looking at how a single Wairarapa District Council’s water function could work with Wellington Water to deliver more efficient and effective outcomes for ratepayers
- It noted Wellington Water is already providing some support to SWDC
- The Wellington Water Committee would like to see the proposal better consider options for the most efficient and effective way of delivering three waters services in the Wairarapa, and encourage further thought on this before deciding how a single council could be set up and how it would operate
- Options for working closer could be a light touch approach, providing project support, through to more substantial management on behalf of councils, capability building, training and lending a hand with significant projects (ie asset management)
- If a joint working relationship of some sort was to be formalised between Wellington Water and a single Wairarapa District Council then an assessment of the impact on both organisations would be necessary, as it could affect both their business models
- The Wellington Water Committee would welcome the opportunity to discuss options for how Wellington Water could work together with a single Wairarapa District Council.

### ***Martinborough Community Board***

Overall, the board did not believe that “in its current form, the proposal will deliver a favourable outcome for the Martinborough Ward”.

If the proposal were to go forward it believes community boards would be crucial to its success and that they should have:

- Decision-making powers over all local assets and amenities
- A proper budget with elected members paid appropriately
- Community board chairs should have speaking rights at council meetings
- Boards must have appropriate levels of officer support and involvement in annual plan and long-term planning processes
- Adequate funds set aside for training newly elected community board members
- Consideration of a community board representative on the transition body

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<sup>2</sup> Wellington Water Committee provides overall leadership and direction for Wellington Water. Wellington Water is a company that provides three waters network management and is jointly owned by GWRC and Hutt, Porirua, Upper Hutt and Wellington city councils. A representative from each council sits on the committee.

- Robust terms of reference so they could be equal partners with the council.

At the Commission hearing in Martinborough on 23 May 2017, Martinborough Community Board deputy chair Victoria Read elaborated on the submission. In particular she stated that the South Wairarapa community boards currently had important local place-shaping roles but the draft terms of reference did not support this philosophy.

Areas supported if the proposal were to proceed included:

- The Wairarapa Committee of GWRC (although has residual concerns whether recommendations of the committee will be respected by GWRC)
- Martinborough Ward councillor on the Rural Standing Committee
- Maintaining current area offices
- A recommendation that community board terms of reference are discussed with exiting councils and existing community boards before being finalised by the transition body

## 3.2 Iwi organisations

### *Rangitāne O Wairarapa Mandated Iwi Authority*

Rangitāne O Wairarapa Mandated Iwi Authority submission neither supported nor opposed the proposal. Their submission also discussed the history of the Crown dishonouring Te Tiriti as important context to their iwi's position on the Wairarapa. They also described the electoral process as inequitable for tangata whenua. Other points, in summary, are:

- The distinction between Māori and iwi must be clarified
- Must retain iwi members with voting rights on council committees
- Voting rights for iwi-nominated members of the Wairarapa Committee of GWRC
- Suggest a new council set up an informal body consisting of the mayor, CEO, one councillor and the chair and general manager of Kahungunu ki Wairarapa and the chair and kaumatua of Rangitāne O Wairarapa, as Masterton does at present. They note the value of this group in the freedom to explore the community hapū and whanau dynamics without the constraints of organised debate and formalities
- Iwi must have seats on the transition board, with full voting rights
- At the Commission hearing in Masterton on 24 May 2017 Tina Te Tau-Brightwell (speaking on behalf) asked for permanent status for the Māori standing committee.

### *Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust*

The submission of Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust in principle supported the draft proposal with specific submissions on a range of particular issues. The Trust asked the Commission to consider the context of their iwi and history and basis of their rights and interests in the Wairarapa and how these have been seriously impacted on by the Crown through various breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. They particularly pointed to "...creating a perception that Rangitāne as tangata whenua were wiped from the history books and had no rights in the Wairarapa". The trust considered that the proposed amalgamation of councils is not just about their rights as tangata whenua guaranteed under Te Tiriti, but also their ability to once again help grow and stimulate the local Wairarapa economy as property owners and developers. They saw the amalgamation as an opportunity to grow a "true partnership", and for the Wairarapa to become a leader in New Zealand for Māori local authority relationships. The trust saw an opportunity for a relationship based not "on fear and suspicion, but on mutual respect and good faith".

The trust considered the model proposed in the draft proposal to be weak and recommended features to strengthen the model:

- Iwi appointees should lead the standing committee and have a majority of the membership
- Membership should be iwi as opposed to Māori – no need for matāwaka representation
- Iwi should be the permanent chair, on a rotating basis between the two iwi

- Do not think there is a need for separate marae representation
- The Commission ought to recommend that iwi have a seat on all appropriate committees, community boards and working parties as a matter of right – to give effect to the Waitangi Tribunal’s recommendations about iwi involvement in all appropriate councils’ functions and power sharing
- Suggest the committee have a specific role in naming of reserves and roads
- Suggest that the wards should each have Māori names reflective of the history of the area, or at least a Pākehā and a Māori name
- Concerned that a Māori standing committee is required to be set up for only a first term
- Agree that the appointment of members to this committee be jointly decided by Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, the transition body and the Commission
- Request that iwi are on the transition body and the proposed implementation team
- Clear expectation that the two iwi have equal representation on the committee
- Strongly support iwi members having voting rights on all relevant committees and community boards

Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust noted that in a practical sense it will be easier for Rangitāne to provide comment on relevant issues, but do not want to be lost in a bigger structure or have existing rights or relationships weakened.

### ***Rangitāne O Wairarapa***

Rangitāne O Wairarapa (Horipo Rimene) supported the proposal with amendments, in particular to Schedule B – List of Iwi and Hapū:

- “The list in the draft proposal is wrong: Rangitāne O Wairarapa Incorporated are the Mandated Iwi Authority with its whanau/hapū/marae the mana whenua mana moana of the area alongside Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa. Tamakinuiarua are in the Tararua District Council outside of the Wairarapa boundary. Rangitāne North Island is also wrong as we have our whanau from the Manawatu called Rangitāne O Manawatu. Will be great for mana whenua to sit alongside council, to collaboratively work together for a better region.”

Rangitāne O Wairarapa also stated that “...the Māori standing committee should have a representative from each marae, namely: Te Ore Ore Marae (Masterton), Hurunui-O-Rangi (Carterton), Papawai (Greytown), Kohunui (Tuhirangi) and Hauariki (Martinborough), Okautete (Homewood) alongside the two iwi representatives. This way it gives hapū/marae a place to voice their concerns straight to council”.

### ***Kahungunu Ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority***

Kahungunu Ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority supported the proposal. In summary, they considered that the legislation now requires processes for involvement of Māori or iwi in local governance:

“Experience has shown that the most effective way of achieving this is by the creation of specific positions within local authorities for Māori who are selected by local tangata whenua. These are distinct from general elected council positions. GWRC is at the forefront of iwi involvement. SWDC has operated a Māori Standing Committee almost since its inception. A few months ago, MDC made iwi appointments to its committee structure, but the opposition and bitterness toward that decision shows exactly why such measures are necessary to correct the 170 years of racial imbalance. This submission stresses the importance, nationally as well as locally, of the orderly progression of Māori and iwi involvement in the decisions affecting the entire community in local body affairs.”

Specific comments were:

- A Māori standing committee to be maintained with conditions and rights no less than those of the existing committee of South Wairarapa District
- At the Commission hearing in Masterton on 24 May 2017, Nelson Rangi, on behalf of Kahungunu Ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority, requested that the proposed Māori standing committee be made permanent
- Iwi-nominated members on council standing committees to be maintained, with full voting and other rights
- Wairarapa Committee of GWRC to include a member nominated by each of the two Wairarapa iwi, Kahungunu and Rangitāne, with full voting and other rights
- Iwi representation on the transition body and implementation team
- In the event that a Māori constituency is established in Wairarapa, it must in no way affect the inclusion of iwi-nominated members as detailed above
- While completely voluntary and informal, the current Masterton Council / Iwi Governance Group is a valuable and effective way to advise council on various matters affecting tangata whenua, and to discuss avenues of approach. We strongly support the retention of this group and urge the new council to use this group as a vehicle of dialogue

### ***Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki Nui ā Rua Trust***

Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki Nui ā Rua Trust supported the proposal with amendments. At the Commission hearing in Masterton on 24 May 2017, Rawiri Smith, speaking on behalf of the trust, wished it to be acknowledged that the trust was a Treaty of Waitangi Post Settlement Governance Entity.

“In the proposed plan for a Wairarapa District Council, the structure for Māori participation should include more than the Māori standing committee can offer.” The trust considered that “the changes being made should not lessen what Māori have now”.

The trust requested three changes to the proposal, which it considered are practised or able to be practised now:

- having Māori represented throughout council from full council, to committees of council
- a mana whakahono-like komiti for Māori
- Māori representation on the Wairarapa committee coordinating with Greater Wellington Regional Council

The trust was concerned that paragraph 38 of the proposal represented a “step backwards from what Ngāti Kahungunu currently enjoy in MDC. In a post-Waitangi Treaty Settlement era, this means that the progress Ngāti Kahungunu has made is being set back at the time Māori entities are redressing cultural and commercial opportunities. Currently having iwi representation at the full council table, having voting responsibilities with the committees, being supported by officers representing Māori, having a Kaumatua for Council, having a Māori partnership committee; are parts of a total package that now supports Māori decision-making made by MDC. These are possible parts of Council support for Māori that are not parts of the proposed Wairarapa District Council and won't be precedent setting. Rather than degrading the relationship between iwi and council I propose not only these conditions, but improving this good support with another committee. While some might see this committee as an extra piece of administration, the type of committee I suggest here is a requirement.”

The trust also mentioned that the passing of the Resource Legislation Amendment Act brought a requirement for councils to have a Mana Whakahono committee with Māori entities such as iwi to collaborate on environmental issues. “I propose that this required committee extend past the statutory obligation to include all parts of the Māori relationship with Wairarapa District Council. The make-up of the committee is already regulated and is not referred to in the proposal, but will need to be a part of the final make-up of the Wairarapa District Council and GWRC.”

The trust also considered that the Wairarapa Committee of GWRC should have Māori representation that can meet the iwi initiatives from that council. “Those initiatives include a governance group of iwi leaders called Aratahi; a group of iwi experts, Te Upoko Taiao who directed the drafting of a regional plan that is currently the Proposed Natural Resources Plan; the inclusion of Wairarapa iwi representatives in the Ruamahanga Whaitua Committee; a committee of technical iwi managers known as Poutiriao; iwi capacity contracts that allow for iwi consultation and a reference group of Wairarapa kaitiaki. In order for a Māori perspective to be represented by the Wairarapa Committee to Greater Wellington there needs to be at least two iwi representatives on this committee.”

### ***Te Patukituki O Wairarapa – first group***

Te Patukituki O Wairarapa opposed the proposal but want some other form of change.

Te Patukituki O Wairarapa believed that if the amalgamation goes through:

- It will dilute Māori representation. “Representation is already only in advisory capacities.”
- The power will move north away from South Wairarapa district

- “Our people are already disengaged in local governance – how will an amalgamation help?”
- The information available does not feel independent – the research does not appear to reflect reality
- We are not confident the figures supplied are realistic
- Wairarapa will lose its district and untouched identity
- Boundary problems – “us versus them”
- No true reason to amalgamate
- “What is broken to do this to the people?”
- Local councils should work more collaboratively while maintaining their jurisdictions
- United Nations Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-government
- Iwi still are not at the decision-making table under the rights of the Treaty of Waitangi

They also noted: “The people don’t trust LGC or any other Crown Institute.”

### ***Te Patukituki O Wairarapa – second group***

A second submission from a group of rangatahi opposed the proposal but wished to see other forms of change within the existing council structure:

- “These changes should only be informed by local residents especially those who are tribally connected to the land and waterways as traditional custodians
- The current communication platforms available to the people are inefficient and ineffective and lead to inevitable misrepresentation. The susceptible population are especially ill-represented in decisions that will impact negatively on their futures
- The current representation is biased and institutionally racist
- Local ratepayers who are of royal indigenous lineages are not represented as well as they need to be. Because of this the current model is ill-informed and the custodians of the land personified are neither regarded or consulted with.”

The submission considered that an amalgamation “... will only further disrupt efforts of the marginalised population Ngā Morehu o ngā hapū o te Wairarapa, the long standing survivors of colonisation”. The submitter was concerned that the waterways are dying and are of the highest concern and priority. Education must reflect current and honest states of our locality. The submission notes that “gradual change within local and regional governance is not an option when we have educational, housing, social, ecological crisis banging on our front and back doors”.

### ***South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee***

South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee opposed the draft proposal. Their reasons included:

- “As Treaty partners, our hapū and marae of the South Wairarapa have very little say currently in the running of our rohe. However, with an amalgamation into a bigger group our voice will be reduced even further
- The current and proposed governance structure for Wairarapa is a clear breach of the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which states that indigenous people have the right to self-determine (Article 3)
- We are concerned at the lack of consultation we are afforded with the current system of governance and cannot see this improving with the proposed amalgamation
- Our two iwi here do not have the mechanisms or capacity to speak and act on behalf of our hapū and or marae. We do not trust that our iwi will appoint representatives who have our South Wairarapa hapū interests at heart to the council table
- Māori must have voting rights at the council. Without this, representation is merely tokenism. You can’t keep inviting us to the table and not allowing us to eat. Māori perspectives and leadership are pivotal to a functioning society
- Māori have not been part of the development of this new proposed structure. Again, we are treaty partners, where is our rangātiratanga that the Crown took from us?
- Lastly, we hear of the financial benefits we will be afforded through the amalgamation. However, despite commercial growth and apparent affluence in the Wairarapa, Māori here are still disproportionately represented in all the negative statistics including poverty, incarceration, health, education, and unemployment. When Wairarapa is growing economically, it doesn’t mean Māori are benefiting”

At the Commission hearing in Martinborough on 23 May 2017, Reuben Tipoki, speaking as Chair of the Māori Standing Committee, added that there should be two Māori wards in addition to the 12 councillors currently proposed.

The South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee requested that they have input into what representation looks like. “We do not accept that the Transition Body and implementation team decides the nature of our representation.”

### ***Ngāti Kahukurawhitia***

A submission on behalf of Ngāti Kahukurawhitia opposed to the draft proposal. In summary:

- “Different thoughts on hapū boundaries with Council boundaries”
- “We already have a very good relationship with SWDC but there are issues we have that could be improved. This will not happen under an amalgamated district council”
- “We have two Councillors that are Māori on the SWDC and are happy with their work at present”
- “MSC are currently working alongside SWDC to gain a voice for Featherston Māori”
- “Concerns over Māori representation from the Waiawangawanga South”

- “I see District Councils as similar to most Ahuwhenua trusts etc. that are required under the Local Government Act to be reviewed every so many years. SWDC have in my humble opinion ... passed with flying colours so in summary going back to the old adage don't fix what is not broken”

At the Commission hearing at Masterton on 24 May 2017, Michael Roera spoke about concerns with the boundary of the proposed Wairarapa District and how it related to Treaty claims.

### ***Individuals from Kohunui Marae***

Two individuals from Kohunui Marae opposed the proposal. One considered that their representation “will be greatly diluted with amalgamation” and was concerned about environmental issues in South Wairarapa e.g. Lake Wairarapa, Aorangi Forest, Lake Onoke.

### ***Ngāti Hamua hapū***

An individual on behalf of Ngāti Hamua hapū opposed the draft proposal but wanted some other form of change. The submitter considered there needed to be more Māori representatives on council because “we have a lot of hapū in Wairarapa and our two iwi Rangitāne and Ngāti Kahunguhu cannot make decisions on behalf of all the hapū in the Wairarapa let alone the non-Māori council reps as well”. The submitter felt this would improve the efficiency of the current council model. This submitter was also concerned at “our water ways, land and coastal areas as these areas have been neglected” and needed Māori in kaitiaki roles to ensure their future.

### ***Papawai Reservation Pa Trust***

Papawai Reservation Pa Trust opposed the proposal but wanted some other form of change. The submission considered the representation in the wards to be “unfair” and “inconsiderate of the quality of councillors representing the current SWDC, and as well as the CDC”. The submission was concerned at MDC debt management and wastewater management responsibilities. The submission suggested a 15-17 person-strong amalgamation of the three Wairarapa Councils. “A 12-person council under this proposal seems superficial and transparent... Under this proposal it does not give Māori a Guaranteed Position (under the Treaty etc.) to represent as an iwi rep as part of the council, as a member with equal voting rights.”

The trust considered that community boards “are good concept with the Council’s co-operation”. The submitter encouraged the Commission to “create a proposal that can be fair for Māori elected councillors. Possibly an amalgamation of CDC, SWDC together, and that Masterton remains responsible for the northern Wairarapa.”

## 3.3 Other organisations

### *Wairarapa Federated Farmers*

“Wairarapa membership opinion is divided on the proposal and is therefore neutral on whether it should proceed to a final proposal or not.” The Wairarapa Federated Farmers’ submission focused on the structural factors it believed “necessary to ensure the concerns of the farming sector and rural communities in Wairarapa will be addressed, should the proposal proceed”.

Specifically, it recommended:

- That the Wairarapa Committee (of GWRC) be empowered with appropriate decision-making delegations and budget to develop and implement non-regulatory catchment-based initiatives which integrate biodiversity, pest management, land and water management and flood control
- That recommendations from the Wairarapa Committee be given significant weight
- That consideration be given to provision for at least some councillors to be elected at large. For example: one elected councillor from each of the seven wards, with the balance of five councillors elected at large
- That draft terms of reference for the two standing committees – to be developed by the transition authority, the Commission, iwi and representatives of rural industries and communities – be made available for public comment prior to being made legally binding on the new council for its first term
- That the transition authority develop a policy on the appointment of non-elected members to council committees, sub-committees and advisory groups
- That any final proposal and/or the transition authority should provide that any general rating forming part of the integrated system will include the setting of a uniform annual general charge at or near the maximum allowable extent set out in local government rating legislation; and any general rating forming part of the integrated system will include the setting of a general rate differential for properties defined as rural at a factor of less than 1.0
- That the transition authority maintain a high level of community communication, including specific consultation with Federated Farmers on the terms of reference and delegated authorities for the Rural Standing Committee, and on rating policies for the new council

### ***Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce***

The Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce's submission was made on behalf of its members and its Business Leaders Network. It supported the proposal, identified a number of "challenges" it presents for business, and noted two changes it would like to see.

It supported the proposal as it "offers the best opportunity":

- For the Wairarapa to have one voice
- To align rules, systems and procedures across the region
- For coherent forward planning and service provision
- To improve economies of scale
- To provide Wairarapa-wide strategies for economic growth

It identified, among others, the following challenges:

- Provision of sufficient resourcing to keep disruption to a minimum (ie resource consents, permits etc)
- Avoidance of spiralling transition costs (eg IT)
- Business hubs should remain a focus
- Appropriate level of representation on rural wards

And it would like the following changes to be considered:

- Inclusion of a representative from the business community on the transition board
- More power to be given to the proposed Wairarapa Committee of GWRC to ensure business have the ability to influence impact of decision-making on local economic policy

At the Commission hearing in Masterton on 24 May 2017, the Chamber of Commerce stated they sought a quick decision on the proposal to reduce uncertainty for businesses.

### ***Destination Wairarapa***

Destination Wairarapa supported the draft proposal because:

- It works to promote the Wairarapa as a single region for tourists to explore
- Tourism is one of the largest industries in the region in terms of revenue generation and contribution to GDP – for the year ending February 2017, Wairarapa tourism generated \$163 million from visitors to the region
- To have a single district council working in the same way as the region's tourism industry would be of great benefit to the tourism industry

### ***Water New Zealand***

Water New Zealand neither supported nor opposed the proposed amalgamation. Water New Zealand's interests are "in seeing water services in the Wairarapa delivered more efficiently regardless of whether the amalgamation goes ahead".

It made the following observations on challenges facing “smaller districts such as the Wairarapa” in their delivery of three waters, as well as more general comments:

- Low levels of compliance with drinking water standards
- Increasing societal expectations for water quality
- Capability and capacity constraints, including an aging workforce
- Ability and willingness to pay for infrastructure investment
- These challenges mean that some parts of the New Zealand population are receiving a much lower standard of service than elsewhere
- Without a change in the way that water services are delivered, this disparity will only get worse over time
- Wellington Water is already providing support to two of the councils (SWDC and CDC) and there is a lot more it can offer, from individual collaborations to more formal shared services agreements
- The proposal does not provide much analysis about whether and how the new council can overcome future challenges in its delivery of three waters services
- If the proposal for a new council goes ahead, it is imperative that the question of how to best deliver three waters services is considered up front during the setup phase
- It will be especially important that, during any transition, existing capability and institutional knowledge is utilised well and retained where possible
- The proposal does outline how rates for wastewater services will be ring-fenced, at least until 2024, but there is no mention of what would happen to the drinking water and storm water components of the rates – the three waters need to be considered as a package as they have interdependencies

### ***Public Service Association***

The Public Service Association (PSA) stated that its members had not formed a collective view on the amalgamation proposal – it was neither for nor against. Its main concerns related to the transition process as follows:

- If it is not handled well there could be grave consequences for local government in the region through the loss of experienced, knowledgeable staff and the loss of important institutional knowledge
- A less-than-optimal process could see staff lose employment conditions and expectations (either by design or by accident) and this could see a loss of morale and commitment
- Staff should have certainty that their views will be taken into account during the process
- Council staff are very focused on delivering quality public services and during any transition process would want to ensure the changes needed are negotiated positively

- It suggested that the merging of three sets of working conditions into one document to cover an amalgamated council, and setting the terms and conditions “going forward”, needs caution and professionalism if it is to be successful
- It requested that an additional position be established as a representative of the staff. The PSA, as the representative body of council staff, should be given the opportunity to nominate this representative
- It requested that the PSA be invited to nominate a representative to the implementation team

The focus of the PSA supplementary verbal submission was on creating a well-managed transition and avoiding loss of institutional knowledge, using the Auckland experience as an example.

### ***Creative New Zealand***

Creative New Zealand (CNZ) supported the draft proposal and made the observation that by pooling resources, removing duplication of roles, and utilizing scales of economy a new consolidated council would “be better able to deliver core services (including libraries and community amenities)” and “take into account the cultural interests of people and community”.

CNZ also stated that an amalgamation would remove issues of siloed funding, overlapping funding needs, and better pooling of resources and personnel.

Toi Wairarapa (Heart of Arts) is “currently limited in the work it can undertake because, although they operate across all three districts, they don’t have support from all three councils”.

### ***Featherston Ratepayers and Residents Association***

The association, on the whole, supported the draft proposal and made the following points:

- There would be only one council to deal with
- Staff would be spread less thinly and a bigger council would be able to have more specialist staff
- It would create a stronger mandate for the council to advocate for the Wairarapa as a whole

Its submission expressed support for the advantages of a Wairarapa District Council as set out in the draft proposal. It also makes the following observations and suggestions:

- The association appreciated “that South Wairarapa residents have enjoyed a hugely advantageous ratio of councillors to residents since at least the last government reorganisation” but noted that the existence of the “Association is testimony to the fact that this has not delivered corresponding benefits for the ratepayers of Featherston in recent times”. It was satisfied that the proposed representation ratios are “fair and cost effective”

- It suggested, however, that South Wairarapa councillors be elected at large rather than by town ward. “This would have capacity to reflect representation by ability, rather than by affiliation and might encourage SW candidates to work together for the south of the council district, rather than continue to try to represent one town’s interests”
- It would like to see recognition of community board representation written into the decision-making at council
- It would like to see a community board item as a standard on council agendas as has been adopted already at SWDC
- Regarding transition costs, it considered that the amalgamation’s long-term benefits will soon eclipse these initial costs
- It supported the suggestion that Masterton debt will be ring-fenced but notes “our own turn is yet to come with proposed borrowing for the three towns waste and fresh water upgrades in the long term plan”
- The transition could impact on council productivity – in the association’s view, “only for the better in the long term”

### *Sustainable Wairarapa Inc*

Sustainable Wairarapa supported the draft proposal but with some amendments:

- It believed that the Wairarapa is in need of a single clear voice to articulate its current and future needs outside the Wairarapa
- “In the main, the proposal as it has been developed provides an opportunity to advance this objective while at the same time protecting and enhancing the identity of the various communities within the Wairarapa”
- It would like to see a more balanced representation on the transition body – based on present accepted arrangements Masterton would have four representatives and Carterton/South Wairarapa two each
- Clarifying and strengthening the governance role of GWRC, responsibility to the “commons” – water, air, climate change, biodiversity loss, coastal protection, sea level rise, etc, – would be strengthened
- While a Māori standing committee “has merit”, it would like to see “iwi representation on council, as per the current Masterton model, continued and fixed as a principle of this proposed reorganisation”
- “Many ratepayers do not have a clear understanding of the different levels of governance and their specific roles, and how they are involved in their daily lives.” Sustainable Wairarapa suggested the Commission produce a clear statement of the governance roles of the region, local and ward structures as they pertain to the Wairarapa as part of more education and communication to ratepayers

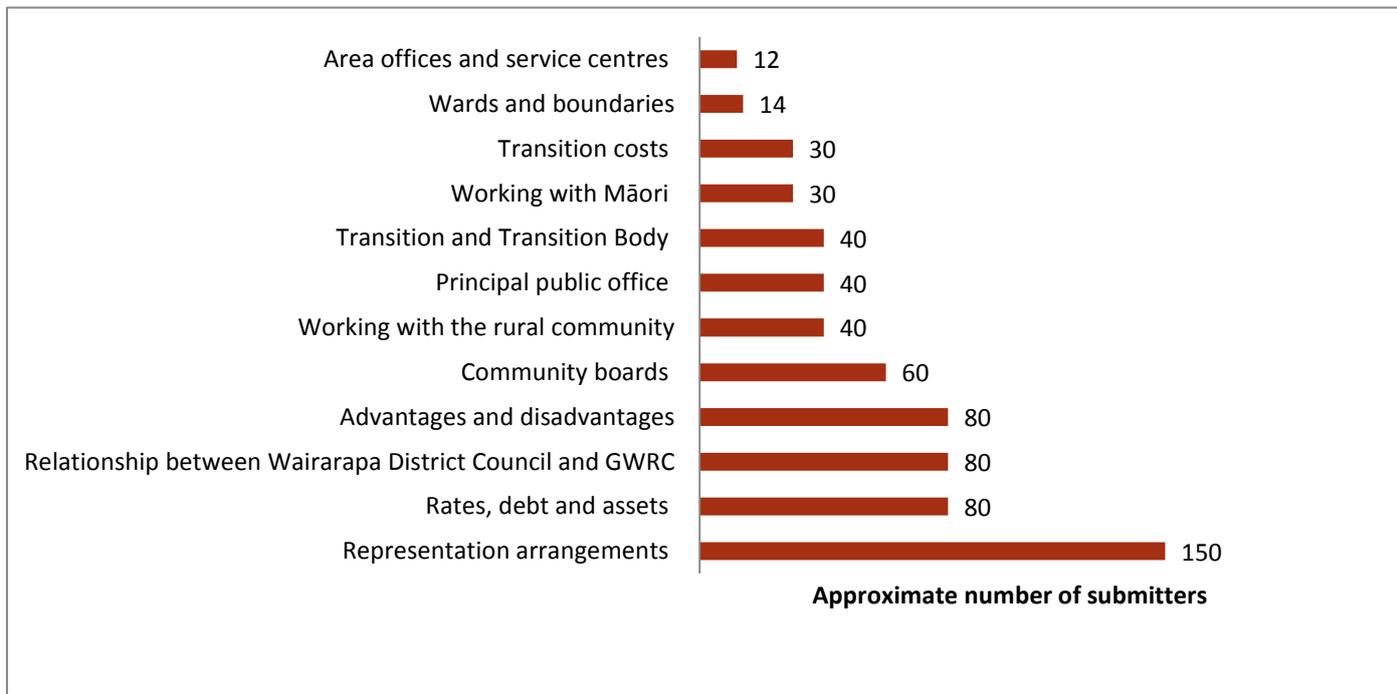
### *Wairarapa Voice*

The organisation opposed the draft proposal, primarily on the basis there is “no reason to change” and “there are other ways to improve efficiency under the current model.” It added:

- It was concerned about the loss of local democracy and decision-making – there is an automatic unbalance in putting together two groups of similar size with one of roughly three times the size. It will dominate, as it should to continue to represent its constituents, but that is at the expense of the southern districts
- “The addition of community boards under their terms of reference (Schedule A p.20) is a sop to democracy and representation but simply adds a layer of faux representation and is meaningless”
- “The proposed soft benefits have no guarantee of being achieved and the estimates of transition costs could easily blow out”

## 4 – Topic-specific comments

Graph 8: Number of submitters who made comments on each topic



### 4.1 Wards and boundaries

Fourteen submitters asked for changes to the proposed boundaries and wards.

#### *Ward names*

A small number of submitters raised concerns about the names of the two new proposed wards.

The use of Te Kauru was questioned and the existing name of Opaki suggested instead. [Harold and Denise Devenport]

One submitter disagreed with the name Maungaraki. The submitter stated that the name was confusing because there is another community in the Hutt Valley also called Maungaraki. She suggested that with two other existing areas in the Wairarapa also starting with “Ma...” adding Maungaraki could create mix ups. She suggested alternative names such as Riversdale, Gladstone, Stonvar, or another (not specified) Māori name of significance and with connections to early eastern coastal settlements. [Jan Stephen]

Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust suggested iwi input into naming of the new wards, and “that each ward should have Māori names reflective of the history of the area. At the very least, there should be an alternative Māori name for the wards currently with Pākehā names.” The trust considered “this is a simple but powerful way of giving effect to real and meaningful engagement with iwi at a local government level”.

### ***Ward boundaries***

Five submitters raised issues about the boundaries of some of the wards:

- Maungaraki Ward – part of the existing Carterton District should not be included
- Carterton Ward – the boundary of Waingawa River results in an industrial area that is within Carterton, but is serviced by Masterton District
- Featherston Ward – reinstate the original Featherston boundary
- Martinborough Ward – should not encompass most of what was the former Featherston County Council

### ***Tararua District included***

Four submitters wanted all or part of the Tararua District included:

The reasons included:

- Tararua District is not sustainable or viable in the long term
- Eketahuna has a closer community of interest with Masterton and the Wairarapa than Dannevirke
- The Wairarapa used to include part of the current Tararua District (the area from Manawatu Gorge and out to the coast at Akitio)

### ***Alternative models***

A small number of submissions suggested alternative models for determining ward boundaries. These included:

- using rivers as ward boundaries
- a means of ensuring geographical-based issues are not lost, over population-based wards
- three wards based on existing council boundaries

## 4.2 Representation arrangements

A large number (approximately 150) of submitters raised issues about representation arrangements (note that Māori representation, rural representation and representation on Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) are discussed below in sections 4.4, 4.5, and 4.10.). As well as general concerns about representation and the importance of local representation, this section also discusses access to elected representatives, issues around the numbers of elected representatives proposed, and a concern that Masterton, as the largest town, would dominate voting numbers.

### *Support*

A small number of submitters stated that they specifically supported the representation arrangements in the draft proposal.

### *General concerns about representation*

About 25 submitters raised general concerns that the draft proposal would result in a loss of representation over the current situation. These two submitters' comments are reflective of the issues raised:

- "I don't understand how it would be possible to get better input and understanding of a region's requirements with less representation...it is likely that the smaller districts will be compromised under this proposal" [Connie Chapman]
- "I feel we have better representation under our current model. If our councils do amalgamate, as I see it our councillors will just be changing titles from councillor to board member" [Paul Eising]

Another five submissions highlighted the need to ensure that those people who are elected are of the highest calibre. One submitter was concerned that "In reducing the number of councillors we are going to get lower quality representation." [Byron L Knight].

Other examples of submissions included:

- "A great idea/plan as long as the ward representatives are strong and represent their wards well" [Olga Reddington]
- "A critical factor would be the competence and integrity of the councillors who are elected" [Natalie Hopkirk]

### *Importance of local representation*

About 30 submitters, including Wairarapa Voice, highlighted the importance of local decision-making generally, and raising more specific concerns about the loss of local democracy. For example:

- "Decisions about activities affecting local communities should be made locally" [Lynda Coogan]
- "Local decisions by local people" [John Cairns]

- “The purpose of local government is to give a voice to the local communities it represents” [Suzanne Galbraith]
- “Local decision making affecting local issues is immensely important...” [M Beale]
- “...that local dimension to our local government would be lost under this proposal. So – dilution of local knowledge and truly local representation would be the result” [Warren Tucker]
- “Any form of amalgamation will wipe out the voice of smaller communities and diminish democracy” [Aneta Bond]
- Amalgamation will decrease local participation in elections and thereby reduce democracy [Helen Dew supplementary verbal submission]
- “The current local government is more democratic and keeps the ‘local’ in Local Government” [Marianne Hackney]
- “The amalgamation will be a way of making the smaller towns and rural areas invisible” [Janeen Cross]

### ***Access to elected representatives***

Approximately 15 submissions raised concerns that access to elected representatives would be diminished under the proposal. These submitters considered it important that residents be able to easily talk to their local decision-makers. A number also mentioned that they valued the accessibility and approachability of their current elected representatives and “opportunities for meeting elected officials in everyday life”.

For example:

- “Elected representatives will be harder to know, to meet with, gain the attention of and interact with” [John Maxim Booth, Julian Downs]
- “We will lose the personal touch with councillors/mayors, CEs and staff in each area if we amalgamate” [Trish Hawkins]
- “We could lose the ‘handshake relationship’ we currently have with council” [John Cairns]
- “... at present, we have access to our Mayor and councillors and they do listen if approached by the town’s residents, no matter what the issue...if the amalgamation went ahead, I am certain we would lose this avenue of contact...” [Mark Telford]

Some submitters speaking at the Commission hearing in Carterton on 31 May 2017 made reference to overseas models based on smaller units of local government being a better fit for the Wairarapa. [e.g. Hilary Capper, Mike Hewison]. Examples given included Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Montreal. Wilfred van Beek, in his supplementary verbal submission, also referred to the desirability of the Swiss model with “very direct communications between ratepayers and councils”.

### ***Make-up and numbers of elected representatives***

Several submissions questioned the make-up of the proposed representation arrangements:

- “...the number of proposed councillors does not seem proportionate...” [Byron L Knight]
- “...the proposed make up of elected representation will be unbalanced – there would be no consistency of proportion between the number of elected representatives and either the size of territory, nature of community or the population being represented” [John Maxim Booth, Julian Downs]
- “The balance of councillors needs to not only reflect population numbers but also the productive economy of the Wairarapa” [David Binning]
- “There needs to be more councillors, and representative of interests other than those of the existing councils” [Peter Raymond Ladd]
- “...the number of councillors would need to be spread evenly among the wards, not based on population to ensure each ward had equivalent representation to the current model” [Stuart Campbell]

In examining the draft proposal’s table comparing representation by population with other parts of New Zealand, one submitter asked “Why should we have the largest number of total elected members (34) when we are by no means the largest population pool. I would have thought we should average between Timaru-Marlborough-Whanganui i.e. total elected members 20.” [Sid Hayes]

Several submitters commented on the numbers of elected representatives for particular wards or areas. Mostly they were concerned that there was not enough representation in South Wairarapa, including specific mention of Greytown, Martinborough, and Featherston, Carterton, and Maungaraki. Examples of submissions include:

- “We do not believe that one member representing Martinborough on a potentially ‘Masterton centric’ Wairarapa Council will allow for truly democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, the Martinborough Ward” [Martinborough Community Board]
- “Carterton would lose its power to choose what is best for us” [Judi Harding]
- “Masterton will have many votes, while Featherston will have one. Not acceptable” [Peter Sharpe]

About 20 submissions asked that the Commission reconsider the number of councillors and community board members and the way they are elected. Examples of submissions that suggested alternative distributions of councillors included:

- Masterton ward should be cut by one to four [David Binning]
- One mayor, eight councillors should suffice [Donal Kinnell]
- Federated Farmers recommended that the Commission consider at least some of the councillors being elected at large. “For example: one elected councillor from each of the seven wards, with the balance of five councillors elected at large”
- Similarly, another individual submitter suggested “one elected councillor per ward; the rest at large to tap into a wide pool of talent and attract people with a whole of Wairarapa perspective” [E McGruddy]

- “...dispense with community boards and double the number of councillors...” [Pete Roberts]
- A mayor and two councillors for each of Martinborough, Featherston and Greytown, a mayor and six councillors for Carterton, and a mayor and 12 councillors for Masterton – in total 24 councillors and five mayors. [David Capper supplementary verbal submission]

Other submissions that suggested alternative models include:

- “...that South Wairarapa councillors are elected at large rather than by town ward” [Featherston Ratepayers and Residents Association]
- “...consider a 15-17 person, strong amalgamation of the three Wairarapa councils” [Papawai Reservation Pa Trust]
- “...half the councillors be elected by standing at large...” [Christopher George Engel]
- “Wairarapa residents of voting age, vote for all 12 councillors, the same as we will all be voting for the Mayor” [Margaret Feringa]

### ***Too many elected representatives***

A small number of submissions thought that under the proposal there would be too many elected representatives. For example:

- “The number of elected members for the combined council in comparison to other councils referred to on page 13 of the proposal is high... good governance should not be based on numbers on committees...” [John Dalziell]
- “Want a much leaner version of representation; no community boards.” [Donald Kinnell]
- “Twelve councillors, 21 community board members, plus standing committees seems like an expensive and unwieldy structure” [Anthony Lawrence]

### ***Concerns that Masterton would dominate voting numbers***

Over 40 submissions were concerned that Masterton, as the largest town and with the greatest number of elected representatives, would always be able to “out-vote” the other two smaller areas. Sentiments included:

- “Masterton will take over completely”
- “...all the power will go to Masterton”
- “...an unfair advantage...”
- “The proposal is too Masterton centric”
- “...this proposal will only work for Masterton and leave other towns out in the cold”
- “Big Brother Masterton will dominate the whole show”

## 4.3 Community boards

About 60 submitters made comments about community boards.

### *Support*

The three district councils, the Martinborough Community Board, and several individual submitters supported the inclusion of community boards in the proposal. For example:

- “Community boards are the key to this proposal being effective from a governance and representation perspective” [South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC)]
- “Community boards are vital to a successful amalgamation” [Alisoun Werry]

A few people cited the opportunity that community boards could present. For example:

- “Very local level processes such as swimming pool opening hours and public spaces would be addressed at community board level” [Shane Atkinson]
- “If boards are kept local and have a budget which allows them some ability to seek feedback input etc. then the ability for enhanced participation has great potential” [Campbell Gillam]
- One submitter considered that “community spirit can be managed by Community Boards as it is in the South Wairarapa at present”. They considered that the boards “will be as successful as the communities want them to be” [Jane Terpstra]

### *Financial and other support for the community boards*

Concerns about community board budgets and the need for them to be well resourced and supported by the council were raised by several submitters. For example:

- “We believe the proposal will be strengthened if there is specific provision made for each community board to have sufficient staff resources and budget allocated to enable them to operate and make decisions effectively” [Carterton District Council (CDC)]
- “Community boards must have a proper budget with elected members paid appropriately for this role” [Martinborough Community Board]
- “...community boards should have more powers and dedicated budgets and staff” [Richard Rudman supplementary verbal submission]
- “...it will be important for the council to work hard to ensure an even distribution of effective decision makers across these boards... I hope the council will help to support newer community board members” [Kate Hodgkinson]
- “The council must set aside adequate funds for training newly elected community board members” [Martinborough Community Board]

- “Community boards should have more autonomy and larger, clearer budget delegations than the current South Wairarapa community boards. For example, boards should have full authority around urban and central business development and in areas such as decisions related to parks and reserves” [Masterton District Council (MDC)]
- “Recognition of community board representation should be written into the decision-making at council. For example, that reasons must be supplied if council fails to give effect to community board representations on an issue” [Featherston Ratepayers and Residents Association]
- A community board item as a standard on council agendas as has been adopted already at SWDC [Featherston Ratepayers and Residents Association]

### *Strengthening the draft terms of reference and roles*

Several submitters were either concerned that the draft terms of reference in the proposal do not give the community board enough authority or considered that they could be strengthened. For example:

- “...the terms of reference could be further strengthened by a statement about the purpose of local boards” reinforcing their role as local leaders and decision-makers [CDC]
- “...such boards should have full authority around urban and central business development and in areas such as decisions related to parks and reserves” [MDC]
- “The terms of reference should also provide for the preparation, every three years, of a local area plan that sets out the priorities and preferences of the communities in their area for local activities and levels of service over the term of the board” [CDC]
- “Community boards must have decision-making powers over all local assets and amenities” and “community board chairs should have speaking rights at council meetings” [Martinborough Community Board]

Conversely, one submitter considered that councils should “keep control of the preparation of development and implementation plans for urban reserves and amenities as community boards do not have the expertise to do this and a lot of staff time would be needed to support this process” [Suzanne Clark]

Martinborough Community Board supported the recommendation that the community board terms of reference are discussed with existing councils and community boards before being finalised by the transition body.

Other suggestions by individual submitters included:

- That community boards have the power to veto council proposals [Stephen Butcher]
- Rangatahi representation on the community boards [Tiraumaera Te Tau]

## ***Opposition***

A number of individuals were opposed the creation of community boards for a wide variety of reasons:

- Some submitters were concerned about the large number of community board members and a small number mentioned the potential cost. For example: “It is difficult to actually identify any specific efficiencies in the proposal. Yes, the community will lose two mayors, twelve councillors and two CEOs – but you add 21 community board members” [GH Harrison]
- “Community boards would not be motivated to see the big picture for the Wairarapa and to strategically place sports and other facilities where they best serve the wider Wairarapa community” [Suzanne Clark]
- “But to have more responsibility the community board member would need to be qualified to deal with those responsibilities. In effect, you’d be creating little mini councils for each town which would undermine the whole point of merging the councils” [Jennifer Grey]
- “The addition of community boards... is a sop to democracy and representation but simply adds a layer of faux representation and is meaningless” [Wairarapa Voice]
- Community boards would be a “watered down and substandard version of what is already in place” [John Grey]

## ***Alternatives to creating community boards***

Some individual submitters offered alternatives, including:

- “Retain the present council system of three councils. Give the community advisory boards greater power, i.e. equitable voting rights for the region on the greater regional councils. Draw from each of the councils to create these community boards...” [Elizabeth van Kesteren]
- “Halve the number of community board members and recommend to the new council they are given a meaningful budget to make everyone accountable which will still give good representation without the excessive numbers as currently proposed” [John Canning]

## 4.4 Working with Māori

About 30 submissions made comments about working with Māori. See also section 3.2 for a summary of iwi and hapū submissions.

### *General support for Māori participation*

A number of submissions stated general support for enhanced Māori participation. For example:

- “We believe there is an opportunity with a new council model to enhance the current arrangements for Māori participation in council decision-making across a broad range of council activities” [CDC]
- One submitter considered that an important aspect of the proposal “will include meaningful and proper Māori representation as our Treaty partners in this country” [Chris Peterson]

### *Support for proposed Māori standing committee*

A number of submitters (including two councils and some individuals) supported the proposed Māori standing committee.

SWDC supported the approach “... as this gives more formality to this important aspect of a district council’s operations”.

CDC supported the proposed Māori standing committee but noted that it needs to be well-supported by council resources. CDC supported the Commission’s decision to leave any other decisions and arrangements for the council’s relationship with Māori for the new council to make.

### *Standing committee does not go far enough*

MDC did not consider that a Māori standing committee reflects the Treaty of Waitangi relationship and through local government-related legislation (specifically referring to RMA Amendment Act 2017). MDC considered that “treating Māori in the same way as the rural community... is an affront to Māori and the principles of the Treaty. MDC believes Māori should have the opportunity to influence all issues facing our community and be part of the final decision-making, through decisions at the highest level (not solely through a standing committee recommendation or solely Māori-related issues).”

### ***Proposal reduces existing Māori representation***

Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority, Rangitāne O Wairarapa, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki Nui ā Rua Trust all supported the proposal with some amendments. Rangitāne O Wairarapa Mandated Iwi Authority neither supported or opposed the proposal. However, the submissions from all these organisations, along with MDC, spoke strongly of the history of Māori and the Crown as Treaty partners as important context for their submission and their calls for stronger iwi representation in the proposal. Iwi organisations proposed a principle that the changes to the local government structure should not lessen what Māori have now. This comment was made with reference to the way MDC and the two iwi currently work together, including both formal channels (voting members on council committees) and informal channels (council/ iwi governance group meetings), support from council officers representing Māori, having a Kaumatua for council, and having a Māori partnership committee.

Some submitters were opposed to the proposal because:

- “In this model there is also no clear Māori representative pathways.” [Janeen Cross]
- “The progress MDC has made regarding Māori representation will be largely lost and Māori voice reset to bare minimum.” [Pania]

Some individual submitters were also concerned that the proposal reduces the voice of local Māori. For example:

- “Currently out of all the SW towns Featherston has the highest population of Māori or those that identify as a descendent of Māori and there is no representation for them at all, not even on the Māori Standing Committee.” [Danielle Sargent]
- “I don't like that fact that Māori have not been seriously considered by LGC and that they expect the proposed combined Council to make that decision.” [Deborah Davidson]

### ***Want to see other change for working with Māori***

The South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee, Ngāti Kahukurawhitia, Ngāti Hamua, and Papawai Reservation Pa Trust, and two submissions on behalf of Te Patukituki opposed the proposal but wanted to see other forms of change to strengthen Māori, iwi and hapū involvement in local government.

### ***Resourcing for Māori standing committee***

Some individual submitters considered that the Māori Standing Committee could be better resourced and supported by council. For example:

- “If the proposal does go through, the Māori standing committee needs to have more teeth and actual authority.” [Joshua Vergunst]

### ***Opposition to proposed Māori representation***

Some submitters were opposed to the inclusion of a Māori Standing Committee in the proposal. For example:

- “Should this merger go ahead, the Masterton Council's flawed decision to include members on various committees appointed (with full voting rights) solely on the basis of their ethnicity must NOT be transplanted to the new Wairarapa council. This was an undemocratic idea that clearly does not have universal support, even within Masterton” [David Buck]

### ***Suggestions to increase Māori representation in the proposal***

Several submitters suggested other ways to increase Māori representation. For example:

- Iwi-nominated voting members on council committees [iwi organisations and MDC]
- A Mana Whakahono a Rohe committee (based on proposed changes to the Resource Management Act 1991) [Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki Nui ā Rua Trust]
- Iwi seats on all committees, community boards and working parties as a matter of right [Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust]
- Independent Statutory Māori Boards [Johni Rutene]
- Iwi as the permanent chair of the Māori standing committee on a rotating basis between the two iwi. Also expressed concern that the Commission can only set up the committee for the first term [Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust]
- That the Māori standing committee have a role in naming of reserves and roads [Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust]
- Two Māori wards [Deborah Davidson, South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee supplementary verbal submission]
- “Two Māori standing committees – north and south” [Deborah Davidson]
- At least two iwi representatives with voting rights on GWRC Wairarapa Committee [Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Tāmaki Nui ā Rua Trust, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority]

See also section 4.10 for further discussion about the Wairarapa Committee.

### ***Iwi and/or marae and hapū representation***

There was a differing view between submitters on whether iwi or marae and hapū should be on the Māori standing committee. Views included:

- “...the Committee should be led by iwi appointees and have a majority of the membership. Note that we have used the word “iwi” as opposed to Māori and do not think there is any basis for Māori representation other than the two Wairarapa iwi. We do not think at this point in time that there is a need for matāwaka representation” [Rangitāne Tū Mai Ra Trust]
- The distinction between Māori and iwi should be clarified [Rangitāne O Wairarapa Mandated Iwi Authority]

- “Our two iwi here do not have the mechanisms or capacity to speak and act on behalf of our hapū and marae” [South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee]
- Include a representative from each marae, namely: Te Ore Ore Marae (Masterton), Hurunui-O-Rangi (Carterton), Papawai (Greytown), Kohunui (Tuhirangi) and Hauariki (Martinborough), Okautete (Homewood) alongside the two iwi representatives as a way to give hapū/marae a place to voice their concerns straight to council [Rangitāne o Wairarapa]
- An appropriate mechanism in the draft proposal to accommodate decisions being made at hapū/marae level [SWDC]
- “There needs to be an elected Māori member representing for each area (an iwi representative AND hapū representative). These members need to have equal voting rights on ALL matters not just advisory roles. There needs to be equal representation between Māori and the other representatives” [Danielle Sargent]

### ***Transition body and implementation team***

The four iwi organisations, South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee and MDC recommended Māori representation on the transition board, and some also requested iwi representation on the implementation team. See also section 4.11 for discussion about the transition body.

## 4.5 Working with the rural community

Over 40 submissions mentioned rural representation-related issues.

### *Support*

Ten submitters supported the proposed rural standing committee specifically.

The reasons given included:

- Rural areas and issues would be better represented
- Rural communities have different issues to urban communities
- The rural standing committee would clarify and strengthen “our responsibility to the ‘commons’ – water, air, climate change, biodiversity loss, coastal protection, sea level rise etc” [Sustainable Wairarapa, R E Stewart]

### *Opposition*

Three submitters were opposed to the rural standing committee. Issues included:

- The rural standing committee would need suitable funding and powers to be efficient
- The rural standing committee would have unelected members on it that are not accountable to ratepayers
- Concerns that details about the rural standing committee were not provided such as the number of people that would be on the committee, how they would be elected, and voting rights

### *Impacts on rural community*

Another group of submitters raised general concerns about the impact of the draft proposal on the rural community:

- The rural wards are too large and under-represented
- Rural interests need a stronger voice
- Fewer councillors overall results in poorer rural representation
- Fewer representatives with knowledge of rural specific issues
- Rural communities pay the most rates but are represented based on population
- There would be an urban bias with no benefits for a rural community. “The people that live in Masterton won’t know what is best for those in Pirinoa” [Lois McAvoy]

### *Ward specific comments*

A small number of submitters had concerns about particular rural communities and/or wards. For example:

- It would be hard to cover all the rural issues in the Martinborough and Carterton wards. These included rural, coastal, urban, horticulture and tourism impacts
- Martinborough should have two councillors because of its size
- Maungaraki Ward would be under-resourced because of its size
- Te Kauru and Maungaraki wards should be combined and known as the Masterton Rural Ward with two reps
- Maungaraki and Martinborough wards are too large for just one councillor each
- Create an additional rural ward for the rural areas of South Wairarapa with one additional councillor

### ***Alternative models***

A number of alternative models for rural representation were put forward, including:

- Two Wairarapa representatives on GWRC [Mr. J. Assink]
- An elected rural member on the council elected by those with rural-rated properties, advised by a Rural Advisory Committee [Richard Winder]
- Rural representation should be more geographically focused with additional resources [M Beale]
- Give the rural standing committee decision-making delegations and similar resourcing to community boards [CDC]
- Changes to the Local Electoral Act to allow two councillors per rural ward [CDC]
- Rural community boards as an additional resource to rural ward members [CDC]
- Rural ward councillors would need to be well supported [CDC]
- Linkage and alignment between a rural standing committee and GWRC Wairarapa Committee
- Encourage rural ratepayer groups to establish a relationship with a new council and a rural standing committee

### ***Terms of reference***

The submission by Federated Farmers made a number of suggestions, including specific consultation with Federated Farmers on the draft terms of reference for the rural standing committee, including its delegations.

## 4.6 Principal public office

Approximately 40 submitters discussed the proposed location of the principal public office.

### *Terminology*

Most actually referred to it as the “head office”, with one individual submitter specifically commenting on the language the Commission chose - “...please, call it what it is – it’s the head office rather than this strange concept of a principal public office...”. [Brian Baxter] This submitter also strongly supported the Commission making the decision on where the head office should be.

### *Cost*

One individual submitter questioned how much a new principal public office would cost. [Alan Lodge]

### *Support for Masterton office*

A small number of submitters, including MDC, stated that they were in favour of the principal public office being located in Masterton.

The reasons for supporting a Masterton location included:

- Masterton is the commercial, service and retail centre of the region
- It is the home to many entities with a focus across the whole Wairarapa, such as government agencies, banks, sporting bodies, Wairarapa District Health Board, the Chamber of Commerce, and large firms (e.g. utility companies, legal, accounting)
- Over half the population of the Wairarapa lives in Masterton
- GWRC offices (including Civil Defence headquarters) are already located in Masterton, and there is the possibility of GWRC building new offices there in the future
- The headquarters of both iwi are located in Masterton
- There is no precedent in New Zealand of citing the main council office in a town other than the largest urban area [MDC]

### *Opposition to Masterton office*

Of those submitters who stated that they did not support Masterton as the location of the principal public office some expressed their general opposition but did not suggest an alternative location. Reasons for opposing Masterton included:

- Adverse impact on smaller towns if a new council is too Masterton- focused
- The choice of a location for the council offices will determine which existing district “...will get the best of the benefits and which districts get the worst of the costs” [Mr. J. Assink]

A number contested that Masterton was the economic centre of the Wairarapa and a small number simply suggested a “more central” location.

There were a couple of recommendations for locations in South Wairarapa. Greytown and Featherston were suggested by one submitter each.

### *Carterton office*

The most popular alternative location was Carterton, with over 20 submitters favouring this town as the location of a principal public office. The reasons given included:

- Carterton is geographically the centre of the Wairarapa
- It is a 10-minute drive from Masterton and accessible from the whole of the region
- It is important for all people to feel they can access the mayor and the council
- The economic centre of the Wairarapa is increasingly moving south – incomes are greater in Carterton and South Wairarapa
- Carterton has features such as a centrally located railway station, council buildings that meet earthquake requirements, and sufficient land for developing a new building and associated car parking
- Locating the head office outside Masterton would illustrate that amalgamation is “not a Masterton takeover” [Brian Baxter]
- A new council office would be “... more fitting and reflect a new beginning as opposed to the status quo” [Ted Taylor]
- The Carterton Events Centre already has modern meeting facilities [CDC]
- A Carterton location provides an opportunity to co-locate or share facilities with GWRC as it is reviewing its office space in the Wairarapa [CDC]

## 4.7 Area offices and service centres

Approximately 12 submissions were received in relation to area offices and service centres.

### *Area offices*

Four submitters were in general support of the three proposed area offices in Martinborough, Carterton and Masterton.

### *Service centres*

Six submitters were in favour of proposed service centres in Greytown and Featherston libraries.

One submitter expressed doubt about the proposal to keep area offices and service centres in place for at least five years. "I would suggest that in practice, in five years' time, we'll have to go up to Masterton to get anything done if it can't be done online. That's not service." [Jo Crabb]

Another submitter in opposition thought that by including service centres in the proposal this effectively undermined some of its justification: "The proposal to retain localised offices in all townships for five years is, in itself, an acknowledgement that there is a need for individual representation in each township." [Rob Smith]

## 4.8 Rates, debt and assets

Approximately 80 submitters discussed rates, debt and assets.

### *Concern about impacts on rates*

A number of individuals opposed the proposal because of concerns about rates increases, particularly for those on fixed incomes. For example:

- “Rates will go up and there is a limit to how much Wairarapa ratepayers can afford” [Stephanie Chilcott]
- “Rates increases will adversely affect those on fixed incomes of which we have an increasing number” [A de Schot]

A small number of submitters queried what the rates would be, concerned there was not enough information in the proposal and so they were therefore opposed to the proposal. One was supportive of the proposal but also wished for more information on rates, debt and assets of the three councils. [Peter Debney]

Federated Farmers also raised issues about how a new council would set its rating policy and how that might impact on the rural community.

### *Benefits for rates*

Conversely, some submitters considered that amalgamation might have a beneficial impact on rates. For example:

- “I would like to think that with the three councils being consolidated, that our rates may come down slightly” [Sue Mackle]
- “Economies of scale = lower rates” [Gary Hewlett]

### *Masterton-controlled spending and rates*

Concerns about Masterton controlling spending and rates were raised by four individuals. Three submitters considered that their rates should be spent in their district and were concerned joining the councils would not guarantee this. For example:

- “I see an increase in rates which would spread my rate contribution into other, more wealthy ratepayers’ areas which means I would be subsidizing many people I don’t have any real connection with” [Peter Love]

See also section 4.2 for additional submitters’ comments and concerns about the potential for a Masterton-dominated council.

### *Council debt*

General concerns about other councils’ debt featured in several individual submissions, with an additional number specifically citing Masterton’s debt as a concern to them and/or not wishing to increase debt in other areas. Examples from Carterton residents include:

- “Why should we in Carterton help pay for South Wairarapa and Masterton debt?” [W. Rayner]
- “...the sense of community when a town is not burdened by debt is quite empowering” [Catherine Davys]
- “As a district currently in a reasonably strong financial position (in term of assets and infrastructure), I’m not keen on amalgamation taking on other districts’ substantial debt and needs to improve their infrastructure...” [Gary McMillen]

One submitter reported that in Featherston there is a concern that infrastructure such as waste water management would be “delayed due to the cost of amalgamating and inherited debt” [Claire Bleakley]

One submitter noted that Masterton has the most modern wastewater infrastructure and as a result the highest debt – but lower average household rates than Carterton. Another similarly noted that Carterton’s low debt levels had “not translated into lower rates”. [Rex McKay]

### ***Rating systems***

A small number of submitters in opposition raised concerns about how the current different rating systems would be handled. For example:

- “...at the present time each council levies its rates on a different basis: it is not possible to support a proposal that does not suggest how this fundamental difference is to be reconciled” [Bruce Caseley]
- “Rates to remain on land value. [Susan Stephen]
- “...if we are to have one council then there should be one universal rating system for the district” [Mavis Saxton]

### ***Ring-fencing of debt – support***

MDC “...supports ring-fencing of both existing debt and reserves (including depreciation reserves) largely on the basis of fairness to all”.

CDC “... strongly support the Commission’s approach to ring-fencing debt associated with wastewater treatment systems.” Like MDC, CDC supported the suggestion of ring-fencing any new debt-funded cap-ex.

Featherston Ratepayers and Residents Association supported the suggestion that Masterton debt will be ring-fenced, and noted “South Wairarapa’s own turn is yet to come with proposed borrowing for the three towns’ waste and fresh water upgrades in the Long Term Plan”.

### ***Other areas to include in ring-fencing***

MDC stated “this is a much greater issue than just wastewater but relates to the depreciation, maintenance and condition of all council assets (above and below ground). There is no logical reason to treat waste water differently from other asset management.”

MDC also supported the suggestion of ring-fencing any new debt and suggested the provisions should be expanded to include “special reserves and other investments” that councils may enter into before a new council is formed.

### ***Ring-fencing of debt – opposition***

SWDC did not support ring-fencing: “...the majority of SWDC supports the status quo option on the basis that over time, there are swing and roundabouts in regards to debt and infrastructural asset condition and replacement.” SWDC also considered a new council “... would be in a position to make decisions on how costs should be apportioned. Currently we happen to be in a cycle where MDC has high debt and the other two councils have lower debt. Over time as the other councils replace their infrastructure their debt will rise and MDC’s debt will be paid off.”

Some individual submitters also opposed ring-fencing the wastewater rates. For example:

- “While it may appear superficially desirable to ring-fence existing wastewater debt, I believe it is more appropriate for a new council to make the decisions on this alongside all the other decisions relating to rating and financial policies that such a council will have to make.” [Colin Wright]

### ***Five-year period for ring-fencing debt***

A small number of submitters were concerned about the five-year period for ring-fencing debt. For example:

- “It would be unfair for Masterton's debts to be paid for by other parts of the Wairarapa...” [Hank Optland]
- “Ring fencing wastewater rating till 2024 is positive but what will happen after that, especially for rural ratepayers?” [Ted Taylor]

### ***Proposed rates cap***

An individual submitter opposed the five per cent rates cap as it would only “prolong the agony of change for some ratepayers for many years”, particularly given large potential changes for properties with either very high capital values and low land values or the opposite. “I suggest 10 per cent would be a more appropriate cap if a cap is to be persevered with.” [Colin Wright]

One individual submitter said “rates must come down, or at least growth in payable rates [year] on year must slow as a result of any change”. [Robin Marshall]

Another recommended a cap of two per cent on rates increases per annum for 10 years. [Tim Horsbrugh]

### ***Prudential limits and service levels***

CDC proposed “provisions that limit debt and address level of service. In line with the current CDC prudential limits, we request that the following limits apply to the new council:

- total debt as a percentage of total assets will not exceed 15 per cent
- in any financial year, gross interest paid on term debt will not exceed 12 per cent of gross operating revenue
- in any financial year, gross interest will not exceed 50 per cent net cash inflow from operating activities”

In addition, CDC requested that “...the Commission requires that at least the current local infrastructure levels of service be maintained across the Wairarapa.”

#### ***Other comments***

- One submitter did not believe “...that the sale of assets should pay for the debt”  
[Claire Bleakley]
- One submitter [who did not give their name] stated that it was “time to spend some money on our country roads, nothing has been done on our road in the past 25 years and our rates keep going up”

## 4.9 Transition costs

About 30 submitters raised issues about the potential costs of joining the three councils together.

### *General concerns about transition costs*

Some 10 submitters expressed worry about how much amalgamation would cost, the impact on ratepayers, and who would end up paying.

- “Amalgamation is costly and we, the ratepayers, have to pay. We can’t afford it, which means we have to borrow. How much more borrowing can we sustain?” [Aneta Bond]
- “It puts considerable financial pressure on those ratepayers who already struggle to pay their rates, such as super-annuitants and low income earners” [Suzanne Galbraith]

One submitter suggested that central government should pay for the transition costs rather than the council. [Robin Marshall]

### *Costs likely to be higher*

Several, including CDC, thought that the transition costs had been underestimated:

- “...would be a costly exercise, as I discovered as a ratepayer elsewhere in NZ during the 1989 amalgamation...” [Suzanne Galbraith]
- “Transition costs indicated in this proposal seem low – especially in IT...” [Warren Tucker]
- “IT transitions are notorious to estimate and generally come out much higher” [Murray Burns]
- “I calculate that the combined ICT project will cost no less than \$10 million” [Ron Shaw]
- “The greater Auckland Council information systems combining was estimated at 11 million, in practice it has broached 800 million and is climbing towards one billion dollars. There is no reason to think it won’t be a similar problem in the Wairarapa” [Anna-Marie Kingsley]

### *Uncertain or unreliable numbers used*

A number of submitters thought that the transition costs were based on unreliable information and/or contained too many assumptions or uncertainties. The majority of these submitters were particularly concerned about the accuracy and validity of the information technology (IT) costs. Issues raised included:

- “The one tangible benefit, \$10m over 10 years is predicated on IT costs of \$2.3m. This figure keeps changing” [Mike Osborne]

- “The favourable cost of the ICT project is based on an estimate by people with limited experience in ICT projects of this complexity using untested assumptions” [Ron Shaw]
- “This is a very high-level assessment. There is no assessment of how systems are used within each Council just an assessment of the applications. There is an assumption in the report that the current systems are fit for purpose. This may not be the case and options should be looked at. A large cost component of any merger of systems is data migration this has not been addressed in the report nor sized” [David McLachlan]
- “Suddenly and suspiciously, such things as vastly complex IT mergers came to cost peanuts or to actually be cost neutral” [John Maxim Boon]

## 4.10 Relationship between Wairarapa District Council and GWRC

Approximately 80 submitters talked about the relationship between the Wairarapa and GWRC.

### *Support for GWRC*

A number of submitters either stated their support generally for GWRC or asked that there is no change to the current role of GWRC in the Wairarapa.

Reasons included:

- “...the structures that support the Wairarapa being very strongly linked to Wellington are critical for the advancement of our region” [Peter McNeur]
- Regional processes such as regional transport to remain with GWRC
- GWRC would continue to supply land, catchment and river management processes

### *Better Wairarapa representation on GWRC*

Seven submitters stated that the Wairarapa community needed to be better represented on GWRC. For example, CDC stated “We believe the current single Wairarapa representative on the regional council is inadequate, given the scope and impact of regional council activities in the Wairarapa.”

In his supplementary verbal submission, Ron Mark MP suggested three Wairarapa representatives on GWRC.

Other submitters echoed this sentiment, for example: “Wairarapa issues must not be overridden or delayed.”

### *Wairarapa Committee of GWRC*

Sixteen submitters were in favour of the proposal to establish a Wairarapa Committee of GWRC. They cited reasons including:

- The committee would foster a more collaborative and co-operative relationship between GWRC and the Wairarapa communities
- “...our responsibility to the ‘commons’ – water, air, climate change, biodiversity loss, coastal protection, sea level rise, etc., - would be strengthened to the benefit of all Wairarapians” [Sustainable Wairarapa, RE Stewart]

A number suggested changes to a Wairarapa Committee to strengthen its role. For example, the Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce asked for “more power given to the proposed new committee to ensure Wairarapa businesses have the ability to influence the decision-making that affects local economic policy”. Other suggested changes included:

- Decision-making delegations should be given to the committee [CDC, Tracey O’Callaghan, Andrew Kania]
- “...recommendations from the Wairarapa Committee be given significant weight, and that any alternative views within GWRC be returned to the Wairarapa Committee, with reasons, to allow further discussion before decisions are finalised” [Federated Farmers]
- “...this will be of little effect if GWRC does not represent the recommendations of the committee” [Martinborough Community Board]
- Stronger voting rights [David Yule]
- The committee needs to adequately and appropriately resourced [CDC]
- Meetings need to be held regularly [CDC, Tracey O’Callaghan]
- The committee should be made permanent [Alisoun Werry, Frank Cody]
- The committee should include a member nominated by each of the two Wairarapa iwi, with full voting and “other rights” [Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority]
- Exploring linkages and alignment between the Wairarapa Committee and a Wairarapa District Council Rural Standing Committee [Bob Francis]

GWRC suggested some clarifications around who and how advisory support is provided to the committee. Specifically, GWRC recommended that its officers provide administration and advice to the committee. Wairarapa District Council officers could also provide advice but not directly, as set out in the draft proposal, as they considered this would not be consistent with section 42 of the Local Government Act 2002. Wairarapa District Council officers could provide advice that informs the GWRC officer advice to the committee.

GWRC also suggested some changes to the list of issues the Wairarapa Committee could consider. Specifically:

- “Flood protection” should be replaced with “flood control” to more accurately reflect GWRC’s role
- “Pest management” should be removed as it is already covered under “biosecurity”
- Economic development should be added to cover the anticipated future role of the committee in dealing with the Water Wairarapa Project

Two submitters were opposed to the Wairarapa Committee. One thought that this could result in all other Wellington district councils wanting a similar committee, with the resultant increase in costs, bureaucracy and slower decision-making [Richard Winder].

### ***Concerns raised about GWRC***

There were some submissions that expressed general dissatisfaction with GWRC.

Of those that mentioned specific concerns these covered:

- The Wairarapa cannot afford the “top heavy approach” GWRC takes to some projects
- “Proposals for flood protection and water are over stated” [Ken Downing]

- “We don’t want gold-plated flood projects” [Ron Sharpe supplementary verbal submission]
- “Interference in local governance by a regional authority” [Ken Downing]
- “...an ever-increasing drain on Wairarapa ratepayers...” [Alan Roy]
- “...a law unto themselves in terms of destruction of our environment” [Alan Roy]
- “The current governance model, and the proposed model, in my personal view, holds the Wairarapa back from being as prosperous (prosperity in all its forms) as it can be” [Paul Crimp]
- “GWRC is out of touch with the needs of the Wairarapa...” [Alan Flynn]
- “GW operate on a very cost/plus mentality...” [MR Hewison]

Many of those who had concerns about how GWRC operates in the Wairarapa suggested that a Wairarapa unitary authority was the solution and requested that this option be “*put back on the table*”. For example, John Burton and Viv Napier (in her personal capacity), speaking to their oral submissions to Commissioners in Martinborough on 23 May 2017 raised this as a preferred option.

### **Other models**

A number of submitters made other suggestions for models that could increase Wairarapa representation and/or influence on decisions of GWRC.

Suggestions included:

- Changing the law to allow more than one Wairarapa representative to be elected to GWRC
- A separate regional council covering the Wairarapa
- GWRC administer rail transport only, and environmental control, noxious animals/plants, and river control, are taken over by the three district councils [Alexandra Johnston]
- A Māori ward that is also part of GWRC [Te Patukituki O Wairarapa]

### **Other issues**

Five submitters stated that they either did not want a unitary authority and/or did not want to merge with GWRC. For example:

“...we will be forced into a merger by Wellington Regional Council” [Allan Gates]

## 4.11 Transition and transition body

Over 40 submitters discussed the transition process if a new council is to be set up.

### *Managing the transition process*

Eight submitters raised issues about how a transition process would be managed. For example, one individual submitter stated “Amalgamation and transition is extremely stressful on both council business and all staff and the effects need to be minimised for a smooth transition” [William John and Helen Jean McGowan]

One submitter suggested a transition plan developed with the three territorial authorities and GWRC [Jill Stringer]

SWDC were concerned about the potential impact of the transition on council work and asked for more thought to be given to the transition period

Representative organisations also submitted on the transition process. Federated Farmers asked that the Transition Body “... maintain a high level of community communication...” including specific consultation with Federated Farmers on a number of listed issues.

The Public Service Association (PSA) provided a detailed submission focused on the transition process and its impact on staff in particular. The PSA suggested “that if this process is not handled well there could be grave consequences for local government in the region through the loss of experienced, knowledgeable staff and the loss of important institutional knowledge. Additionally, a less than optimal process could see staff lose employment conditions and expectations (either by design or by accident) and this could see a loss of morale and commitment. Staff should have certainty that their views will be taken into account during the process”.

### *Make-up of the transition body*

MDC advocated for population-based representation on the transition body reflecting the proportional populations of the three districts. MDC suggested two representatives from Masterton, and one each from Carterton and South Wairarapa (or four, two, and two). “MDC is concerned that the other two districts will dominate transition board voting and that this will be inefficient since the new council may reverse some of those decisions.”

Several other submitters also supported a population-based approach to representation. [Peter McNeur, Alan Flynn, Frank Cody, Sustainable Wairarapa, RE Stewart, John Dalziell]

### *Additional membership*

Several submitters suggested additional members to the transition body:

- A community board representative [Martinborough Community Board]
- A representative from the business community [Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce]
- A staff representative [PSA]

- Māori representation on the transition board [the four iwi organisations, South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee and MDC]

### ***Who appoints the transition body***

One submitter suggested that the Commission should only appoint the Chair with other members being appointed by the affected local authorities. [Margaret Craig]

### ***Implementation team***

A number of submitters provided thoughts on the implementation team.

SWDC did not agree that the Commission should decide who will be placed on the Implementation Team. SWDC suggested that as the existing councils understand the skill-set of existing staff then they should determine who is on the implementation team.

The PSA requested that they could nominate a representative, with experience in change management, to the implementation team.

One individual submitter, with experience of overseas amalgamations and restructurings, thought that more information should be provided on how the team will be established. "...the selection process of the transition team including the implementation team should be transparent and understandable". She made detailed suggestions on how the process should be run and the make-up of the team. [Agnieszka Piatek-Bednarek]

One also requested iwi representation on the implementation team. [Rangitāne Tū Mai Rā Trust]

## 4.12 Advantages and disadvantages

Approximately 80 submitters put forward their thoughts on the advantages and disadvantages which were included in Annex 2 to the draft proposal.

Two submitters specifically stated that they agreed with the advantages and disadvantages.

One submitter (MDC) stated, in talking about the advantages and disadvantages, that the draft proposal "...should be stronger in highlighting these supported by evidence from the various studies LGC has undertaken".

In his supplementary verbal submission, Dayle Harwood questioned if consideration of the status quo should also have included the proposed Wairarapa Committee because GWRC has already agreed to set up this committee.

The rest raised concerns that can be grouped into one of two categories – the benefits are not clear and/or have not been demonstrated, or the disadvantages (costs) outweigh the advantages (benefits). A small number of submitters commented on specific advantages and disadvantages. And another small number suggested additional advantages and disadvantages.

### *Benefits not clearly demonstrated*

About 40 submitters thought that the benefits of the draft proposal were not clear, not adequately demonstrated, or too vague. Comments included:

- "The reasons for change need to be more compelling..." [Gary Dye]
- "No convincing rationale as to the need for change has been put forward" [John Grey]
- "Review of the 'advantages' shows that none are compelling... The LGC proposal is weak, suggesting advantages that are hollow or are actually disadvantages, disadvantages that are only too real... and ignores other disadvantages, not addressing these at all" [Ron Shaw]
- "...many of the leading arguments for amalgamation, such as benefiting from an 'economy of scale' are very dubious and unconvincing" [CK Miller]
- "The 'advantages' are, in the main, extraordinarily subjective with little credence in reality... most of the 'advantages' listed could be pulled apart in a matter of moments and proven to be speculation rather than anything else" [GH Harrison]

### *Costs outweigh benefits*

Approximately 25 submitters stated that they believed that the advantages did not outweigh the disadvantages, or that the costs outweighed the benefits. For example:

- "I don't think that there will be many economic advantages compared with the social advantages and community opportunities currently available which are likely to be lost" [Flora Gilkison]

- “Try doubling costs and halving savings and see what that looks like” [MR Hewison]
- “Do the positives really outdo the negatives of this proposal” [Steve Cretney]

### ***Comments on specific advantages or disadvantages***

About 20 submitters made comments about specific advantages and disadvantages. A small number questioned some of the listed advantages. The most commonly raised concern was with the stated financial benefits.

### ***Additional advantages and disadvantages***

“...a combined authority will provide the opportunity for LA functions to be much more resilient in the longer term. This is not emphasised enough in the literature, and on a weighted basis is more important than the benefits already articulated” [Paul Crimp]

At the Commission’s hearing in Martinborough on 23 May 2017, Paul Crimp, speaking as Chief Executive of SWDC, further emphasised this point. Mr Crimp stated that the benefits of a large organisation were understated in the proposal and that operational resilience was becoming increasingly important, and that having three area offices would improve resilience, particularly for the current smaller councils who have issues with no cover for staff shortages or absences.

CDC suggested additional advantages and disadvantages of the draft proposal:

#### **Advantages**

- It removes the parochialism that exists with the three-council model, and the duplication of activities, enabling the streamlining of Wairarapa-wide decisions
- It is likely to support more community participation through empowered community boards working within local communities
- It will provide an opportunity for the community boards to act as a training ground for potential councillors
- A larger council is likely to be a more attractive employer, with larger teams supporting more diverse experience and career development opportunities
- The scale of a larger council could provide better support for the Wairarapa’s smaller, isolated communities
- The relationship between the council and youth would be assisted by the Youth Council needing to have a relationship with only one council.

#### **Disadvantages**

- There is a risk that transition costs will be higher than estimated, and savings less, delivering fewer benefits to the Wairarapa communities
- Fewer councillors may result in less diversity around the council table

- With less representation, the community may feel disempowered and become more apathetic, impacting on democratic decision-making
- Rural representation will be reduced. Under the current three-council model, rural representation is assured due to the number of councillors and, in the case of Masterton and South Wairarapa, wards. Carterton has a history of attracting a range of urban and rural candidates so is also well represented rurally.
- The geographic size of the rural wards will make effective face-to-face engagement difficult
- There is a risk that services and facilities will be centralised to the area of largest population (i.e. Masterton) or need, and therefore lost to the other communities.

# 5 – Other topics raised in submissions

## 5.1 Another better model

About 130 submitters suggested models other than that set out in the draft proposal. These included a unitary authority, and various forms of improvements on the status quo, including more co-operation between the existing councils and increased use of shared services.

### *Unitary authority*

Many submitters (approximately 36), including the South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC), stated a preference for a unitary authority for the Wairarapa. Most did not give any reasons, but those that did included:

- “...a Wairarapa unitary would better serve and make better decisions for the Wairarapa region” [Jacquelin Ann Wright]
- “GWRC is out of touch with the needs of the Wairarapa...” [Alan Flynn]
- “...the Wairarapa has practically nothing in common with the rest of the greater Wellington region... our economy is fundamentally different, our average age and socio-demographic is different, our climate is different, our topography is different, our culture is different, our water catchment areas are different, our style of tourism is different and so on. In fact, the only thing we have in common is the far end of one rail service...” [John Maxim Boon, Julian Downs]
- Cost of GWRC consents [Alan Flynn]
- “Virtually all the arguments put forward for amalgamating our three district councils... are even stronger for a unitary authority solution. A unitary authority has been shown to work for regions similar to our own (such as Tasman) and this option should be put back on the table if you genuinely seek change and improved outcomes for the Wairarapa” [John Maxim Booth]
- “Wairarapa is capable of governing and managing itself. It did this prior to the 1989 imposed local government ‘reform’” [Mike Gray]

In addition, some specifically stated that they supported amalgamation of the three district councils as a stepping stone towards a Wairarapa unitary. E.g. [E McGruddy, Pete Roberts, Paul Crimp]

- “I support the amalgamation of the three existing territorial authorities... It is certainly a major step in the right direction. However – it is also my view that the proposal does not go far enough. I suggest that a unitary authority is the right solution for the Wairarapa” [Alan Jefferies supplementary verbal submission]

### ***Enhanced status quo***

Some submitters, including the Carterton District Council (CDC), suggested that regardless of whether amalgamation goes ahead, or indeed, in preference to it, there are opportunities to enhance the status quo, and improve the operations of councils within the current framework.

Most of the suggestions centred on a more co-operative and collaborative approach generally, or shared services, specifically. Submissions on these two topics are discussed in section 5.1. In addition, comments included:

- “Enhanced status quo as it is cultural and behavioural change that is needed before structural change is considered” [Jill Greathead]
- “While the draft proposal does offer some advantages, I believe these advantages could be incorporated into an enhanced status quo model” [Lynda Coogan]
- “This innovative, even revolutionary approach would be called the enhanced status quo” [Ron Shaw]

CDC and two individual submitters [Tracey O’Callaghan and Lynda Coogan] all suggested as an enhancement to the status quo that the councils could prepare a joint strategic workforce plan to establish opportunities to share staff resources, and address wider succession and expertise issues.

### ***More co-operation and collaboration***

About 50 submitters mentioned that instead of the draft proposal the Commission should consider a model involving more collaboration between the existing councils and/or build on the existing spirit of co-operation. Comments included:

- “Councils are working together on issues now so more co-operation would help them to achieve as much as amalgamation would” [Christine Hawke]
- “Wairarapa councils over the years have increasingly been working more collaboratively, the benefit of economies of scale and developing and maintaining an experienced workforce of contractors in the Wairarapa with local knowledge. Amalgamation would achieve little advantage” [Mike Ashby supplementary verbal submission]
- “Firstly, talk to each other” [Maureen Leach]

CDC commented that the move of Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) to establish a Wairarapa Standing Committee ahead of any decision on the draft proposal is a good example of how the Wairarapa councils can work more collaboratively.

### ***Shared services***

About 50 submitters suggested some form of shared services as an alternative to amalgamation. Reasons given included:

- Cost savings
- Reduced duplication of managerial duties

- Greater economies of scale
- Current levels of representation could be retained
- Sharing expert resources

The Combined District Plan was cited as an example of how the councils already share services. Other areas where shared services could be considered were suggested:

- Administration including HR, IT, and other office-based functions
- Infrastructure, asset management and engineering, including roading, transport, water management, sewerage disposal, and waste management
- Regulatory functions such as animal control, building consents, resource management and planning
- Community services such as libraries, parks and youth issues

Some submitters also suggested shared services with the regional council on issues such as catchment control, erosion, flooding, pests, biodiversity, water quality.

### ***Centres of excellence***

CDC suggested establishing “centres of excellence” through a shared services approach, which builds on the strengths of each of the current councils. “Each council could host an activity, to be carried out across the three council areas.”

SWDC similarly suggested that “there is also a chance to learn best and different practices from each existing council”.

Other individual submissions recognised the potential of leveraging off the current capabilities of the existing councils. [Derek Williams, Doug Bracewell, M Beale]

### ***Other merger options***

About 20 submitters made suggestions for other forms of amalgamation. These included:

- Carterton and South Wairarapa combining
- Carterton merging with Masterton
- Carterton combining with Greytown and Martinborough
- South Wairarapa joining with the rest of Wellington
- Keeping three district councils but adding a separate Wairarapa regional council
- “the Waikato model”

Three submitters also suggested different models for more fully addressing iwi concerns. These are discussed in section 4.4.

## 5.2 Issues raised about draft proposal process

Approximately 60 submitters raised issues about the draft proposal process, including their concerns about the information provided. Submissions about information pertaining to IT transition costs are discussed in section 4.9. Issues about how long the process has taken, or the timeframe for establishing any combined council, are discussed in section 5.4.

### *General process issues*

Some 15 submitters raised general concerns and frustrations with the process of the Local Government Commission (the Commission). Some viewed it as “a waste of time and money”, believed it was the Commission “telling them what to do”, or considered there were other agendas in play. For example:

- “The recommendations of the LGC are an example of people, public and local body employees and consultants from beyond the Wairarapa telling people in the region what is good for them” [John Hayes]
- “The approach taken in this proposal is arrogant, lacking in integrity and substance and has no objectivity” [GH Harrison]
- “This is a pathetic attempt to save face in light of failed previous proposals” [Primrose Appleby]
- “I feel that the consultation process (which was certainly an improvement on the super city effort) was still just going through the motions” [Bridget Evans supplementary verbal submission]
- “It is my view that the LGC review was about creating a process that would result in a ‘successful amalgamation’ going through. That process was always about managing people away from their aspirations of a unitary authority and self-determination [to] a model that the LGC thought from the outset that ‘it’ could achieve to get a run on the board for itself/central government” [Ron Mark, MP]
- “This process is not about Wairarapa people and their wants” [Gary Dittmer supplementary verbal submission]

### *Consultation not adequate*

About 15 submitters thought that the process to date had not been consultative enough and/or that their views had not, or would not, be taken into account. Sentiments included:

- “There has been little consultation about the proposal” [Jill Livestre]
- “There has not been sufficient engagement with the local community or time to consider the proposal and some residents have become disengaged with the local political process and are not even aware it is happening” [Karen Louise Lundie]
- “It is important more time and effort is put into communicating with ratepayers” [Ian Gunn - Sustainable Wairarapa, RE Stewart]
- “...no matter how many submissions we put in and how many of us oppose this it will go ahead! It is called consultation but really it should be called forgone conclusion” [Gina Smith]

- “There doesn’t seem to be any point writing submissions for them just to be acknowledge and filed. The powers that be need to be listening to what the ratepayers are saying and not just thanking us for our submissions and then ignoring them” [Ross Crundwell]

### ***Lack of information***

About 20 submitters thought that there had not been enough information provided through the process. Comments included:

- “I do not believe the community has enough full information at this time to make a fully informed decision” [Lynda Coogan]
- “There are some vitally important issues which have not even been mentioned in the proposal” [Maree Roy]

Specific mention was made of lack of information on a range of topics, including financial outcomes, how rates will be levied, impact on rate payers, debts and assets, savings, comparisons of net efficiencies, financial standings of each council, local governance roles, and structural details.

### ***Quality of information***

See section 4.9 for issues about the scope and quality of transition costs, in particular those relating to the estimated IT costs.

Over 25 submitters raised questions about the quality or independence of the information provided. These included:

- “I do not believe the costings have been well researched... and need further inspection for validation” [Sean Mulcahy]
- “The draft proposal is not evidence-based...” [John Grey]
- “In fact, the quality of debate around the draft has been very disappointing to say the least” [CK Miller]
- “Without some quantification how do we know if this amalgamation is to be of incremental or large benefit? The proposal is too vague on the proposed benefits” [Mike Osborne]
- “dodgy costings” [Noel Maginnity]

Specific mention was made about the quality of information relating to:

- The previous telephone survey [John Maxim Booth, John Hayes]
- Claims of ‘strong support’ for the proposal [Ron Mark MP]
- Cost savings
- Financial information
- Proposed benefits
- The success (or otherwise) of other amalgamations [John Grey]

- Transition costs

Some individual submitters provided extensive discussions on their perceptions of the quality of the information put forward in the draft proposal. [John Maxim Boon, Ian Hawken, John Hayes]

## 5.3 Timing

Approximately 30 comments about the timing of putting in place a new council.

### *“Get on with it!”*

Most of the comments from submitters in support recommended that amalgamation proceed quickly. Sentiments expressed included:

- “The sooner that amalgamation happens the better!”
- “...should have happened long ago...”
- “Its time has come”
- “Please just get on and do it”
- “Get on with it!”

Reasons given included:

- “The proposal has been before the public for decades” [Frank Cody]
- “...should have occurred back in 1989 with the Local Government reform at that stage” [TR and P Ward]
- A quick decision on the proposal would reduce uncertainty for businesses [Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce supplementary verbal submission]
- “The length of time taken so far over this whole process has been very stressful for potentially affected staff” [Margaret Craig]

Other submitters also commented on the impact potential amalgamation is having/might have in the future on current council staff. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.5.

Two submitters (CDC and one individual) suggested a deadline of October 2018 for a new council to be in place.

### *“Too rushed”*

Conversely a small number of submitters thought that the process of potentially combining councils was “too rushed” and suggested other timeframes:

- “I suggest that any proposed amalgamation be deferred for 24 months...” [Noel Maginnity]
- “Residents need at least five years to consider” [Colin Anthony Garstang]
- Another submitter suggested that a 10-year lead time would be better
- “Perhaps it would be better to postpone any amalgamation, pending a further study of costs and benefits until such a date that these can be more substantiated” [Mr J. Assink]

***The time has passed***

Three submitters considered that enough time (and money) had been spent on the issue of possible amalgamation and that “the time to act has passed”.

## 5.4 Impact on staff

### *Benefits*

Three submitters (including SWDC, and an individual who identified themselves as a current staff member) mentioned that the proposal would be beneficial to staff. Benefits mentioned included:

- Larger teams
- More depth of knowledge within teams
- More specialist roles
- Better back-up cover for staff absences, especially for sole-charge positions
- Consistency in service provision
- The ability to offer mentoring and staff development
- More opportunities for career advancement
- Ability to share resources
- Opportunities for more professionalism

### *Staff losses*

In addition to the timing issues discussed in section 5.4, a small number of submitters (including the PSA) expressed concern that there would be staff losses as a result of a transition to a combined council. For example:

- “Loss of council staff with local knowledge and expertise is a real risk...” [Warren Tucker]
- “Overall the process will be too costly and disruptive to retain vital employees” [Yvonne H. Jansen]
- “We suggest that if this process is not handled well there could be grave consequences for local government in the region through the loss of experienced, knowledgeable staff and the loss of important institutional knowledge” [PSA]

### *Managing change for staff*

A small number of submitters sought a clear framework for managing staff changes and encouraging staff retention. In particular, the PSA provided detailed commentary about the value of staff and the importance of retaining staff employment conditions through any transition:

“Staff are major stakeholders in the creation of a new council just as much as council members... staff are the single greatest asset that councils have... it is important that any transition process respects the contribution staff make to their community. It would be a positive gesture to include them in managing any transition.”

The PSA suggested some of their concerns could be addressed by appointing PSA representatives who are experts in change management to both a transition board and an implementation team.

## 6 – Hearings

The Local Government Commission conducted five days of hearings of submissions between 23 May 2017 and 6 June 2017. A total of 55 submitters appeared at a hearing. These included both individuals and organisations. A list of those who attended is attached as Appendix 1.

Location	Date	Number of submitters
Martinborough	23 May	8
Masterton	24 May	14
Carterton	31 May	22
Greytown	1 June	9
Wellington	6 June	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>

Comments made by submitters at the hearings are reflected in the main body of this summary of submissions.

Group submissions presented by more than one person were counted as a single submitter.

# Appendix 1 – list of submitters at hearings

## *Martinborough 23 May*

1. John Barton
2. Dayle Harwood
3. Martinborough Community Board / Victoria Read
4. South Wairarapa District Council / Viv Napier (Mayor) and Paul Crimp (Chief Executive)
5. South Wairarapa Māori Standing Committee/ Reuben Raihania Tipoki
6. Richard Rudman
7. Garry Dittmer
8. Viv Napier (personal submission)

## *Masterton 24 May*

1. Masterton District Council/ Lyn Patterson (Mayor) and Pim Borren (Chief Executive)
2. Chris Peterson
3. Featherston Ratepayers and Residents Association / Sue Fox
4. Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Iwi Authority/ Nelson Rangi
5. Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa - Tāmaki Nui ā Rua Trust/ Rawiri Smith
6. Rangitāne Tu Mai Rā Trust/ Ronald Karaitiana
7. Rangitāne o Wairarapa Mandated Iwi Authority/ Tina Te Tau-Brightwell
8. Bob Francis
9. Chris Horrocks
10. Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce / Business Leaders Network (Wairarapa)
11. Federated Farmers/ Jamie Falloon
12. Ngāti Kahukurawhitia / Michael Roera
13. John Dalziell

14. Peter Debney

***Carterton 31 May***

1. Carterton District Council/ John Booth (Mayor) and Russell Keys (Deputy Mayor)

2. Ian Hawken

3. Greater Wellington Regional Council

4. David Capper

5. Hilary Capper

6. Tracey O'Callaghan

7. Jill Greathead

8. Adrienne Staples

9. Ron Shaw

10. David McLaclan

11. Helen Dew

12. David Binning

13. Aneta Bond

14. Bridget Evans

15. Mike Gray

16. Mike Ashby

17. Derek Williams

18. Mike Osborne

19. Wairarapa Voice

20. Mike Palmers

21. Mike Hewison

22. Andrew Fletcher

***Greytown 1 June***

1. John Boon

2. Ron Sharpe
3. Colin Wright
4. John Hayes
5. Wilfred Van Beek
6. Alan Jefferies
7. PSA/ John Shennan
8. Claire Bleakley
9. Rex McKay

***Wellington 6 June***

1. Ron Mark MP
2. Peter Ladd