

Tuia Taitonga Southlink



He karere tā te Kaunihera o Taranaki ki te Tonga News from the South Taranaki District Council

The South Taranaki District is now at COVID-19 Alert Level 4. Find out more at www.covid19.govt.nz

Three Waters Reform Concerns

"The assets we are talking about have been paid for by our communities, not by Government, and as such the Government must give councils the ability to effectively consult with our communities before we make any decision on whether we support these reforms."



You may be aware that the Government is proposing some significant changes to how Three Waters (drinking water, wastewater

and stormwater) are managed in New Zealand.

The proposal is that four new entities are set up covering the whole country, and these entities take over the service delivery and management of the three waters infrastructure, currently done by councils. For us, this would mean that our three waters assets (as well as the debt attached to the assets) would be taken over by a new entity that would include councils across the Waikato (including Hamilton), Bay of Plenty (including Tauranga and Whakatāne) and Taranaki Regions and the Ruapehu, Whanganui and Rangatīkei Districts. A comprehensive financial support package is also being offered alongside the reform proposal, which (if we 'opt in') is calculated at just over \$18 million for South Taranaki. The Government believes it has established a compelling 'case for change' based on the financial requirements needed over the next thirty years to upgrade and manage the nation's three waters infrastructure to meet increasing health and environmental standards as well as community expectations. They say the amount of investment needed would be almost impossible for councils to fund on their own, so some kind of change is needed.

The Government believes that by moving these services from individual councils to new entities they will be able to create a large enough scale that will enable those entities to borrow more (to fund the investment needed), develop better capability and capacity in the water services industry, as well as creating operating efficiencies and cost savings.

The Government's modelling suggests that South Taranaki will be better off financially under the proposal. We all support the need for clean, safe, affordable drinking water and a healthy environment. This is the approach that our Council has always taken when investing in our assets and it will continue to be the key driver of future investment decisions, as has been outlined in our finalised Long Term Plan. However, we still have many unanswered questions about the Government's modelling and the reform proposal, such as:

1. How will the governance of the new entities be set up to ensure that South Taranaki District retains its voice over its assets, and that local priorities and development patterns are provided for across the large areas?
2. Will our ratepayers really be better off financially as a result of this proposal?
3. What will the impact of the change be on the Council organisation that remains after the change and what will local government look like in the future?
4. Is bigger actually better and are the efficiency assumptions made by Government realistic?

5. How can the three waters assets be separated from our other assets?

The Government has given us August and September to consider all the information and implications of its proposal. This is not a lot of time to digest the huge amount of information we've been provided so we're working with experts from Local Government New Zealand to help analyse this information and (hopefully) get answers to our questions.

To date the Government has said that councils could decide if they wished to 'opt in' or 'opt out' of these reforms. However more recently I have heard suggestions about it being mandatory. **I would see that as totally undemocratic. The assets we are talking about have been paid for by our communities, not by Government, and as such the Government must give councils the ability to effectively consult with our communities before we make any decision on whether we support these reforms and 'opt in', or not.**

The issues involved are complex and it's crucial that we should not be rushed (or forced) into making a decision of this magnitude without having time to fully understand the proposal or consult with our community.

For more information about the Government's Three Waters Reform Proposal, you can go to the Department of Internal Affairs website Three Waters Reform Programme - dia.govt.nz or Local Government New Zealand's website

Phil Nixon, Mayor of South Taranaki

Council Services at COVID-19 Level 4

Under COVID-19 Alert Level 4, most South Taranaki District Council facilities are temporarily closed to the public.

Facilities including libraries, pools, recreation centres, community venues and playgrounds will all be closed for the next three days. Public Wi-Fi at Council LibraryPlus centres will be switched off and transfer stations will be restricted to essential services only.

South Taranaki Council Chief Executive Waid Crockett says the Council is closing its facilities in line with Government guidelines. "I want to reassure people that all essential services and critical

maintenance works will continue. We will still pick up residents' kerbside general waste, recycling and green waste collection as normal. However, we are unable to do our glass collection as it is hand sorted at the kerbside."

This may change if the lockdown is extended over three days, but we will continue to update residents on our Council website www.southtaranaki.com and facebook page or through our Antenna app. Please keep an eye out on these channels to keep informed about what is happening locally.

Upcoming meetings

Iwi Liaison Committee
Wednesday 1 September, 10am

Environment and Hearings Committee
Wednesday 1 September, 4pm

Policy and Strategy Committee
Monday 6 September, 1pm

Extraordinary Council
To consider funding applications to the Community Initiatives Fund
Monday 20 September, 1pm

Meetings to be held in the Council Chamber, Albion Street, Hāwera*.
*Please note there may be late changes to the meetings above due to COVID-19 Lockdown requirements. Keep an eye out on our website for changes
www.southtaranaki.com

Representation Review out for feedback

Feedback on Initial Proposal due 23 September



After more than a month of pre-consultation, the Councillors agreed to formally consult on an Initial Proposal consisting of 13 Councillors and a Mayor, with no change to the Community Boards. All councils are required to review their representation every six years and Council's decision in November 2020 to establish a Māori ward/s triggered the need for a review. Find out more and tell us what you think by heading to www.southtaranaki.com/repreview

Rates Instalment

Due Wednesday 25 August 2021

The last day for payment of the first instalment of rates for 2021/22 without incurring a penalty is 25 August. If you pay your rates in full by this date you will receive a 2% discount. Don't forget that you can pay online.

www.southtaranaki.com

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