

2 March 2015

Local Government Commission  
Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe  
P.O. Box 5362  
Wellington 6145  
submissions@lgc.govt.nz

**Re: Wellington Region Reorganisation**

This submission is from the Architectural Centre, an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

The Centre has two prime areas we wish to raise with the Commission regarding this local body reorganisation proposal, namely:

(1) issues pertaining to local representation and democratic processes, this relates to our role as an advocate for well-designed built environments, and our belief that representation of local communities is important in good decision-making with respect to urban design and place making in order to represent community values etc. and

(2) issues pertaining to the provision of the built environment (e.g. delivery of infrastructure, public transport etc., development of the built environment)

**(1) Local Representation**

- i. There is reduced numerical representation. Currently we have 161 elected representatives, and the proposal is to halve the number, with 82 elected local and regional politicians.
- ii. There is increased parity of representation across councils; but there still remains significant discrepancies between the numbers of people represented in the different Wards. There is, for example, an almost two-fold difference in the numbers of people represented by any elected representative (i.e. a Councillor or a Board Member) across the region (i.e. Wairarapa 3,533 per elected representative c.f. Ohariu 7,751; average 6,009). We consider that more work needs to be done to further increase representational parity, and wonder if the Electoral Commission might be able to assist in achieving this. We do acknowledge the Commission's observation that the current variation in representation may reflect a variation councillor role (e.g. some part-time some full-time).<sup>1</sup> Is it envisaged that there will continue to be some part-time and some full-time councillors? If this is the case an explicit statement (e.g. 6 x 0.5 councillors) is needed so that a proper understanding of representation is possible. Clarification regarding this prior to hearings commencing might assist submitter decisions regarding any need to speak to submissions at hearings.
- iii. We consider that participation in local elections is also a vital part of democratic representation, and we note that there appears to be a correlation between the level of local representation and participation in local government elections indicated in the Commission's report,<sup>2</sup> suggesting that further reductions in the ratio of elected representative:citizen may negatively impact on participation in

<sup>1</sup> "the time commitment required of councillors differs significantly across districts with some being effectively full-time roles and others only part-time" (p. 87) (<http://www.lgc.govt.nz/assets/Wellington-Reorganisation/Draft-Proposal-Volume-2-Main-Report-for-website-v2-3-2015-02-12-MLG.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> The two relevant observations are: "It is usual for councils with smaller and more geographically dispersed population to have higher headline representation ratios than more populous and more densely settled districts" (v.2, p. 87); "Voter turnout is generally lower in the more urban parts of the region compared to the more rural districts" (v.2, p. 88) (<http://www.lgc.govt.nz/assets/Wellington-Reorganisation/Draft-Proposal-Volume-2-Main-Report-for-website-v2-3-2015-02-12-MLG.pdf>)



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local elections. This is another reason why we strongly encourage the Commission to increase the number of elected representatives. We do not think, for example, that increasing the members of local boards (currently proposed to be 6-10) would be detrimental to decision-making or be unmanageable.

- iv. We support the proposed iwi representation, with the establishment of the Māori board, and iwi representation on Te Upoko Taiao, and consider this to be a strength of the proposal.
- v. We appreciate the Commission's commitment to ensuring significant power resides at the local board level.
- vi. We also support the retention of the current councils' physical locations to ensure consistent levels of access points in the community, though we note that this is only guaranteed for five years.

Numerical Representation						
		maximum no. of people represented		minimum no. of people represented		average no. of people represented
PROPOSED	Per councillor	Kapiti Coast	25,350	Upper Hutt	20,650	23,179
	Per Board Member (Ward level)	Ohariu	11,627	Wairarapa	4,239	8,113
	Per Board Member (sub-Ward level)	Northern-Eastern (Lower Hutt)	11,030	Featherston (Wairarapa)	3,070	8,113
	Per any elected representative	Ohariu	7,751	Wairarapa	3,533	6,009
CURRENT	Per councillor	Wellington Regional	36,779	Carterton	1,030	4,981
	Per any elected representative	Wellington Regional	36,779	South Wairarapa	564	3,209

## (2) Benefits related to the Provision of the Built Environment

- vii. We support a reduced number of planning documents, to remove any repetition and, where appropriate, enable consistency across the region. We do however note that the proposed amendments to the Resource Management Act may well achieve this independent of any reorganisation of Wellington's local and regional government.
- viii. We imagine that a strength of the reorganisation proposal would be a increased ability to co-ordinate across geographic areas. The proposal remains vague regarding how infrastructure provision would be improved (e.g. public transport) given there remains a two-tiered (regional and local) council structure as well as geographic divisions at the local board level. Is the intention to completely remove local body input into such decisions? The documentation appears unclear regarding how local input occurs (given the desire for strong local boards), or does not occur, in such processes.

We neither strongly oppose nor support the reorganisation of the Wellington's regional and local government as proposed. On balance the loss of democratic representation does appear to outweigh any perceived benefit of restructuring our local and regional government. We would like to see the parity issues addressed so the proposed wards are in line with population tolerances used in parliamentary electorates, and, as noted above, the Electoral Commission may be able to assist in achieving this.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on this draft Wellington Region Reorganisation. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



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