



Waitaki

DISTRICT COUNCIL

TE Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri o Waitaki

Growing strong communities.

Office of the Mayor

17 May 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

I am adding some comments to the response that our CEO is sending you in reply to your emailed letter to Councils' CEOs. There are some details that go beyond a LGOIMA response, and which I feel should be expressed.

First of all, I want to be very clear with you that we oppose the three waters reform. We have told the Minister that we oppose them, and we continue to tell our community we oppose them. We do not need to hold a referendum on our community's thoughts as we are very connected to our community, they are sharing their views with us, we understand their concerns and know that the response is a resounding 'No' to the reforms.

However, we do not feel that the answer for us lies with the C4LD group. Your implication that the only way we can oppose the reform is to join C4LD and to withdraw from LGNZ, is simplistic and ignores our community's right to choose our own path as we seek solutions which work for Waitaki.

We do not agree with Councils being gagged by the government if further funding is accepted from the crown, and nor do we agree with being gagged by C4LD, as required in their MOU signed by member Councils.

I also want to make it very clear that we do acknowledge there is a case for change. Not the case that the government tried but failed miserably to make but change which is based on small communities' lack of ability to pay for the required upgrades necessary for them to have healthy drinking water and for returning waste and stormwater back into the environment in a responsible condition.

Joining C4LD will not solve those issues for us as we will have less voice than we currently have. LGNZ is a very important organisation for all councils that has consistently represented the interests of councils and communities for many years on a very broad range of issues. Much of the work and the benefit LGNZ brings goes unnoticed by many outside of councils but is valued by councils due to the collective influence we can have. Leaving LGNZ will lose us opportunities to engage directly with the government, not only on three waters, but also on the many other reforms and issues that LGNZ represents its members on.

We may not all agree with every stance taken by LGNZ, but the organisation represents a wide range of members and as is the case with such representative organisations, we will not always get what we want. Surely you should understand that with your recent protests becoming platforms for all sorts of anti-government and anti-authority issues. Your request that we give up that voice and to join C4LD with its own restrictions on its members, would be damaging to our community, well beyond any minimal effect that it would have on halting the three waters reform.

As an example of our current opposition giving the Waitaki District Council our own voice, last week I was able to meet personally with the DIA's Deputy Chief Executive for Local Government, Michael Lovett, and Hamiora Bowkett who is leading the three waters reform program. It was a very useful meeting where I was able to spend a considerable amount of time discussing the issues and challenges for Waitaki and our people, in the context of three waters reform. My comments were taken on board, and they will go towards helping the department and the Minister understand situations faced by Councils like ours.

Whitestone Waitaki - naturally better

want to acknowledge that we have numerous rural water schemes which supply many farms with multiple points of water to each of those farms. It is not affordable for those farms to keep the extra points of water, especially if they can find an alternative source of water for their stock needs. A suitable solution needs to be found for those schemes and I have been able to give DIA my thoughts and suggestions. I do not believe I would have had that opportunity if we had been a member of C4LD. That is not to say that we do not support the group and many of their intentions, as we do. The members of C4LD remain fellow Councils which have the right to determine their own direction and their elected members remain my colleagues who remain friends and allies.

Your campaign to get people like me voted out of Councils is of course, your right. Doing it because we have not joined a particular group does suggest there is a lack of understanding of the issues and positions of each Council, rather than it being a principled action. I have supported Groundswell's protests against the government's onslaught of further restrictions and regulation on our rural community, but I have not deemed it necessary to tell you how I feel you should carry out those protests. I ask that you reconsider your definition on what constitutes opposition to the three waters reform and show us some respect as we get on with our work on behalf of our Waitaki community.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Kircher', written in a cursive style.

Gary Kircher
Mayor for Waitaki