

25 August 2021

Media release

Mayors & Chairs of Otago/Southland (Zone 6 of Local Government NZ)

The Mayors and Chairs of Otago and Southland (Zone 6) have today written to the Minister of Local Government to formally request a pause to the current three waters reform process to allow Councils the time to engage with their communities.

The reform process proposes to transfer delivery of three waters services from local authorities to four public entities across New Zealand.

The Mayors and Chairs of Zone 6 have taken this step as we have serious concerns about the proposed decision-making timeframe. The three waters reform process is a once-in-a-generation decision for councils and communities. It is also being undertaken at the same time as resource management reform and a review into the future for local government. As such, it is imperative that communities be given adequate time to clearly understand the implications of the three waters proposals that affect them so directly. In addition, Mayors and Chairs expressed concerns that the Government has failed to provide adequate information to the public for any effective engagement to be able to occur.

“The Mayors and Chairs of Zone 6 ask that the Government pause the reform process to allow communities sufficient time to better understand the significant amount of complex information on which the Government has based its case for change and to allow councils to engage with our communities about it. We also seek the Government to significantly up its game in providing information to the public on why it believes the reforms need to happen and what the effects of the reforms on councils and communities will be. Without this pause, there is a very real risk that communities will not be able to make informed decisions about the merits of the proposed reform. Rushing the engagement process will simply not provide for good decision-making, and the decisions made as a result could see adverse and costly consequences for communities, councils and the Government for many years to come”, says Chair of Zone 6, Mayor Bryan Cadogan.

The Mayors and Chairs of Zone 6 look forward to further engaging with the Minister on our request.

For further information, contact Bryan Cadogan, Chair – Zone 6 Local Government NZ, on 027 476 3595