



Environment Institute of
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Symposium

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EIANZ symposium 27 March 2015

Achieving excellent environmental
outcomes in the context of local
government reform in Wellington

Barbara Donaldson, Deputy Chair

Greater Wellington Regional Council



The Challenges

‘Wellington faces a number of significant long term challenges and opportunities and for the most part these are regional in scale, have impacts that cross current council boundaries and require coordinated region-wide responses.

Local Government Commission, December 2014



Demographic challenges

- Population declining or stagnant except in Wellington and Kapiti
- Ageing population, decline in working age population
- Smaller labour force
- Will become more difficult to access and afford skills, particularly in rural communities



Economic challenges

- Uneven patterns of growth, expected decline
- Growing gap between communities
- Lack of diversity in economy
- Economic interdependence of areas
- Uneven debt capacity of Councils



Resilience challenges

- Ageing pipes
- Vulnerable infrastructure
- Water supply
- Public transport
- Flood protection
- Competing responsibilities



Define and agree the flood problem





Territorial responsibilities, above/below MHWS



Environmental management challenges

- Climate change
 - Sea level rise
 - More storms, more droughts
 - Coastal and hill country erosion
- Pressure on water resources
 - Primary production and irrigation
 - Town supply
 - Managing water quality
- Biodiversity and pest control









Environmental management – how are we doing?

- Challenging each other right through to Environment Court
- RPS not as strong as it should be
- Different approaches to planning/plans, funding
- Do best to coordinate but clunky and time-consuming
- Disconnect between natural environment outcomes and some land use and infrastructure priorities and decisions

Technology challenges

Access to technology is changing democracy

- On-line services have raised expectations for 24/7 responses
- Social media enables ideas to spread quickly and widely
- People expect access to information and decision-makers
- New paradigm for citizen engagement



Local government challenges

- Stronger and more effective regional leadership
- Improved engagement with local communities
- Demand for world class infrastructure
- Reduced duplication, rates
- Greater resilience
- Simpler, faster, clearer planning
- Catchment-based flooding and water management issues dealt with effectively

Scale is important!

- Funding and resourcing
- Skills and expertise
- Regional vision and prioritising
- Integrated planning - spatial, unitary, regional
- Partnering with central government and private sector



LGC Proposal

- Unitary authority with 2 tiers
- Governing body(regional scale):
 - Rating, regulatory
 - Overall planning (spatial, environmental, district/unitary)
 - Infrastructure & networks
 - Regional leadership



LGC Proposal

- Local boards:
 - Community engagement and advocacy
 - Environmental initiatives
 - Town centre and street environments
 - Local transport
 - Local governance and oversight of facilities, programmes



Opportunities for environmental management and regulation

- Natural resources managed in integrated way
- Planning streamlined and integrated
- Expertise bulked up
- Integrated science/knowledge
- Regional catchment-based flood and water management



Opportunities for environmental management and regulation

- Non-regulatory interventions prioritised and resources allocated
- Environmental goals better aligned with other council activities, especially infrastructure development
- **Regional Spatial Plan prepared AND implemented**



Conclusion

“Unless Wellington local government is able to enhance and strengthen its ability to plan, deliberate on, and implement activities at a regional level, it will not successfully address the major issues which challenge the region.”

Local Government Commission 2014

