

FOREWORD



We have pleasure presenting the Taranaki Regional Council's *2009/2019 Long-Term Council Community Plan*. This is the third such plan prepared by the Council under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2002.

In 2004 and through the preparation and adoption of the *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan* the Council worked with the regional community to think carefully about the contribution the Council can and should make to the Taranaki of tomorrow. It did this after seeking the views of Taranaki people in a comprehensive consultative process. The efforts of the regional community and the Council in implementing the *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan* and the monitoring of the effects of the implementation of that plan have confirmed that the Council can be most effective by mainly concentrating its efforts on achieving a "sustainable Taranaki", ensuring that our natural environment and physical resources are sustained and protected in the long-term. We are in no doubt that this role is crucial for the future well-being of the region. That is a view that has also come through very strongly from the Taranaki community.

Good water quality, healthy rivers and streams, flourishing biodiversity, fresh clean air, quality coastal environments, productive land and soils and clean industries are vital ingredients of a prosperous, healthy and sustainable community. These are areas in which the Taranaki Regional Council is already playing a significant role. This *Plan* signals a continuation and strengthening of this role over the next ten years.

Also set to continue and develop further over this time is the Council's role in civil defence emergency management, public passenger transport (with a focus on the needs of the transport disadvantaged) and in maintaining regional garden amenities.

The process of producing this *Plan* has been relatively straight-forward due to the Council's commitment to completing a suite of policies and strategies for specific functions over the past decade. This has allowed the Council to focus on developing a *Long-Term Council Community Plan* which compiles and coordinates the strategic directions adopted in those documents as opposed to establishing them.

The debates over the issues and solutions have already occurred through significant public processes. These key planning documents include the *Regional Policy Statement*, regional plans for the coast, air, soil and fresh

water, biosecurity strategies for plant and animal pests, land transport plans and strategies, civil defence emergency management plans and the asset management plans for the regional gardens and flood control assets.

Those who are familiar with the past activities of the Council will notice that most of the programmes in this *2009/2019 Long-Term Council Community Plan* reflect a business as usual approach to the next ten years. There are no major new programmes or expenditure areas proposed. Rather the programmes and budgets deliver upon the aforementioned agreed plans. However transport and flood protection are two areas of notable change.

An expansion of the Council's role in land transport is anticipated over the next ten years. Reforms in land transport planning and funding put in place by central government in 2008 give important new functions and responsibilities to regional councils. The Council is now charged with preparing a *Regional Land Transport Programme* that includes information on all aspects of land transport including state highways, local roads, passenger transport, walking and cycling. The programme sets the direction for investment in this important area. This function is carried out by the Council's Regional Land Transport Committee and relies upon a collaborative approach between central, regional and territorial local government.

In respect of funding public passenger transport services further but gradual enhancements in services are proposed over the next ten years. Provision of well designed and cost effective public passenger transport services that meet the needs of users and particularly the needs of the transport disadvantaged is important for the social well-being of the community.

An option that the Council included for comment in the draft *Plan* was a proposal to significantly step up the level of the New Plymouth bus service. The Council is aware that the present service is quite minimal and not to everyone's satisfaction. The option involves increasing the number, coverage and frequency of urban bus services. Following consultation this proposal has now been included in this *Plan* and will proceed, subject to the Government agreeing to provide its share of the necessary funding.

The Council's long-standing role in river control and flood protection will continue over the next ten years, including ongoing maintenance of

the Council's Waitara and Waiwhakaiho flood protection schemes. A substantial increase in the level of flood protection associated with the lower Waiwhakaiho Flood Protection Scheme is programmed over the next 10 years to reflect the increasing level of development that has occurred in this area.

The Council will complete investigations into increasing flood protection on the Waiwhakaiho River flood control scheme from 2% annual exceedance probability to 1% (that is raise the flood protection provided by the scheme from a 1 in 50 year event to a 1 in 100 year event) and subject to asset management plan agreement, implement the necessary works programme (2009/2010 to 2012/2013).

The Council currently holds a 100% shareholding in the ownership of Port Taranaki Ltd. This reflects the very important role that the port plays in the region. The Council applies dividends derived from port earnings to offset general rates thus reducing the burden of rates for all Taranaki ratepayers. But this is not the main reason that the Council owns Port Taranaki on behalf of the community. Port Taranaki is an integral part of the region's transport infrastructure and is an asset of major strategic value facilitating the movement of goods into and out of the region and the country. It is New Zealand's second largest export port by volume and fourth largest by value. It is the deepest export port on New Zealand's west coast and closest to Australia.

Since 1989 the Council has owned Port Taranaki Ltd on behalf of the regional community. When Port Taranaki Ltd was incorporated the Council inherited \$50m of debt along with its shareholding. Through to 1996/1997 the Council used dividends from the Company to repay that debt. Since 1996/1997 the Council has used dividends to reduce the general rate requirement of the Council.

Port Taranaki's revenue, and consequently its dividend-paying ability, is subject to many risk factors including generally a competitive trading environment and specifically a volatile oil and gas and related petrochemical sector. Dividends have been estimated based upon Port Taranaki's strategic plans. Any circumstance that reduces the level of dividend will result in a commensurate increase in the level of general rates. The Council has taken a conservative approach to estimating dividend return levels allowing for the volatility of the port industry. However Port Taranaki is forecasting good returns over the next ten years (between \$2.7m and \$3.5m per annum). These returns have had a positive influence on the levels of rates forecast for the ten years of this Plan. It should be noted that if the returns from Port Taranaki do not eventuate than there will be a corresponding adverse effect on the level of general rates.

The Council has reviewed its *Investment Policy* in relation to endowment properties to allow for the conditional limited free holding of these properties.

The Council is to establish a council-controlled organisation with other regional councils for the purposes of collaboratively developing and maintaining a software application suite for common use by regional councils in the delivery of their activities. Such collaboration reduces risk and cost to the Council. This is part of the Council's commitment to having the highest quality of information available to allow informed decisions to be made across its range of functions.

Careful operational and financial planning has allowed this *Plan* to present prudent sustainable financial results. Despite increasing costs, the Council is able to forecast an increase in the general rate below the rate of inflation. Specifically for 2009/2010 the general rate will increase by \$184,996. The uniform annual general charge will increase from \$38.25 to \$42.00. Rates for Yarrow Stadium remain unchanged from last year. River control and flood protection targeted rates are planned to increase by \$47,683 to fund the increase in the protection offered by the Waiwhakaiho River flood control scheme and targeted rates for passenger transport services will increase by \$223,376 to fund the further development of passenger transport services. The net effect of these changes is less than \$10 in Council rates increases for the average residential ratepayer across the region.

Over the next ten years general rates increases are budgeted to be at or below the rate of inflation. This is an excellent prospect for the regional community given the current financial problems facing local, national and international economies. The Council will retain a strong balance sheet with no public debt forecast for the next ten years.

Formal auditing of plans in addition to traditional auditing of annual reports is a relatively new statutory requirement for local authorities. The Council's auditors, Deloitte on behalf of the Controller and Auditor-General, have audited this Plan and have issued an unqualified opinion.

The long-term planning process provides an important opportunity for ratepayers and residents to examine and provide views on the Council's proposed activities in the forthcoming years prior to the Council committing itself to a programme.

The Council received 39 submissions on the draft of this *Plan*. As a result of hearing and carefully considering these submissions the Council made a number of changes to this document. These include:

- increasing the level of service in relation to New Plymouth bus services
- providing support (\$5,000) to the Taranaki Garden and Rhododendron Festival
- providing conditional additional support (\$50,000) to Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.

Overall these changes increase the general rate requirement by \$30,000 and the targeted rate for passenger transport by \$75,223.

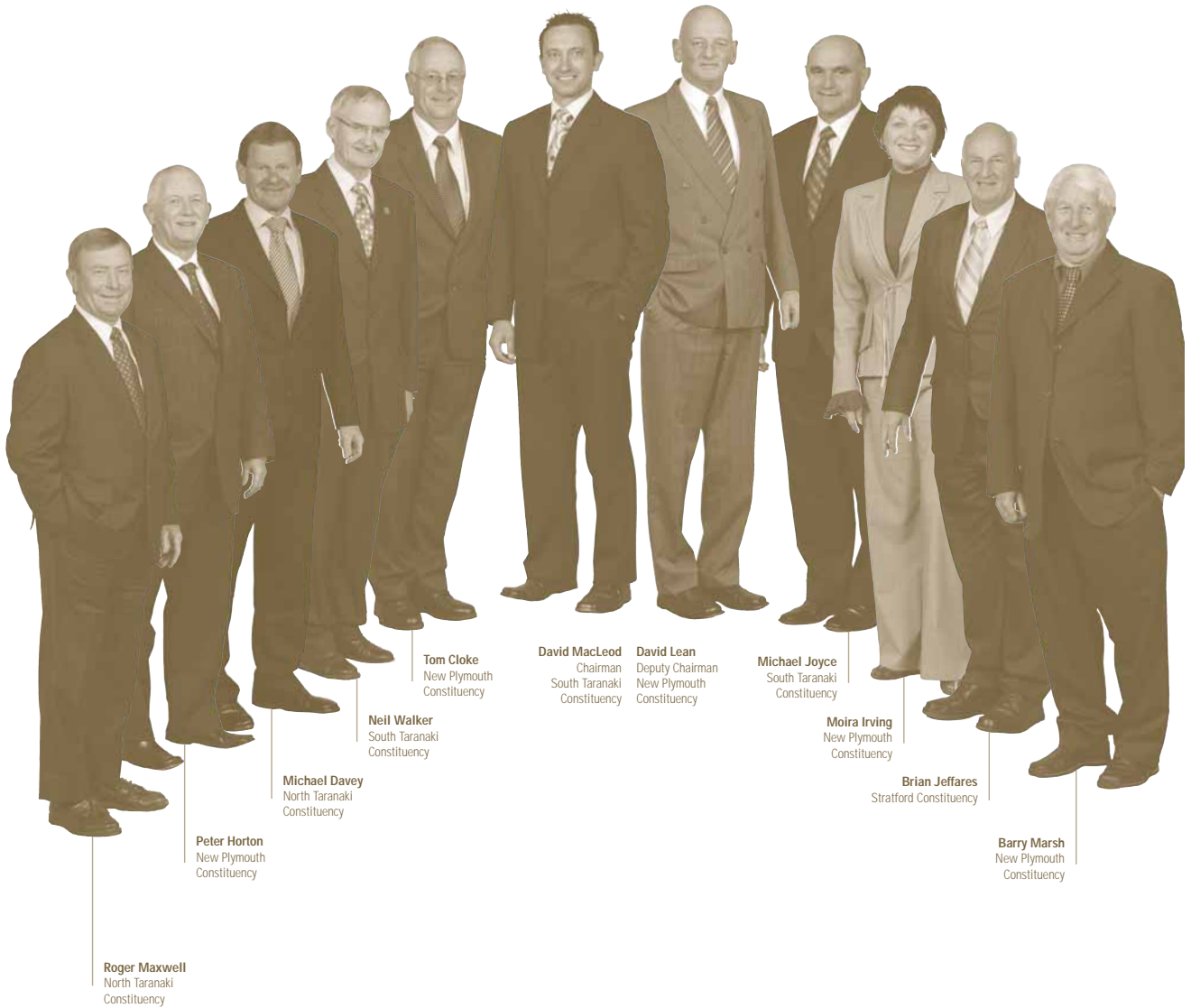
The Council wishes to thank all submitters for their valued contribution. This *Plan* was adopted on 30 June 2009.

David MacLeod
Chairperson

Basil Chamberlain
Chief Executive

COUNCILLORS

Your Councillors prepared this *Long-Term Council Community Plan* with the assistance of Council staff and many others. The Taranaki Regional Council has eleven representatives elected by the community through local body elections every three years.



AT A GLANCE

This *Plan* consolidates the Council's strategic directions and programmes for the next ten years. It also more specifically outlines programmes for the 2009/2010 year, the year ahead.

The *Plan* delivers upon the objectives and programmes agreed with the community through the development of a suite of regional plans, strategies and policies under various pieces of legislation. As such a regular reader will notice consistency with those programmes adopted in the plans, strategies and policies as well as the *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan* and various annual plans.

These plans, strategies and policies include the regional policy statement, four regional plans (air, fresh water, soil and coastal), two biosecurity strategies (pest plants and pest animals), biodiversity operational strategy, regional waste strategy, oil spill response plan, regional transport plan and passenger transport plan, civil defence group plan and asset management plans (river and flood control schemes and regional gardens).

The Council intends to keep strongly focused on its core activities all of which are important for the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of the region. They contribute to community outcomes that Taranaki people have identified as being important. These activities include:

- protecting our rivers, lakes and water from pollution
- managing the wise and productive use of water and soil
- protecting the quality of our air
- managing our coastal resources wisely
- controlling animal and plant pests
- providing flood protection
- protecting biodiversity
- promoting efficient and safe transport networks
- providing public transport services especially for transport disadvantaged people
- ensuring emergency and civil defence systems respond effectively in times of need
- managing regional garden amenities and supporting the protection of heritage
- owning and ensuring good governance of Port Taranaki Ltd
- advocating for and promoting the best interests of Taranaki people and the sustainable development of the region.

More specifically, over the next decade the Council's key objectives are to:

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Prepare, adopt and maintain a comprehensive suite of legally compliant, high quality and publicly considered **policies, plans and strategies** that will deliver to the Taranaki community, efficient and effective management of the Council's functions and Taranaki's natural and physical resources.

In 2009/2010 the Council will complete the reviews of the *Regional Coastal Plan* and the *Regional Air Quality Plan*.



- Process some 3,000 applications for **resource consents**; administer all current resource consents; undertake **compliance monitoring** of resource consents including carrying out more than 30,000 inspections of agricultural and small business premises and completing over 2,000 tailored compliance monitoring programmes for major consents. The Council will also respond to **pollution incidents** and where necessary undertake successful **enforcement** action. These activities will be carried out in an efficient and effective manner.

During 2009/2010, the Council expects to process over 400 applications for resource consents and to process and administer not less than 100% of accepted resource consent applications within statutory timeframes. The Council will design and implement approximately 200 compliance monitoring programmes for major consents and complete 3,300 inspections of agricultural discharges and minor industrial operations. Further the Council will respond to all pollution and other complaints and where necessary initiate control, clean up and enforcement actions.

- Monitor and investigate the **state of the environment** in Taranaki and the effects of the implementation of the Council's policies and plans in accordance with the Council's monitoring procedures and programmes. This will be done by applying recognised and reputable methods of data collection, analysis and reporting.

In 2009/2010 the Council will undertake the 2009/2010 state of the environment monitoring programme and comprehensively review the programme for the 2010/2011 year. The Council will conclude a review and report on biological data trends in Taranaki's freshwater ecosystems. On-line live regional data on hydrology, meteorology, soil moisture and bathing beach water quality will be available on the Council's website.

AT A GLANCE

- Provide relevant research information for resource management purposes through a series of **resource investigations and projects**.

In 2009/2010 the Council will collaborate in investigating the performance of nitrification inhibitors and farm nutrient models for Taranaki conditions. The tracking of sand debris along the northern coast will be examined as well as support for other selected studies being undertaken by research organisations.

- Encourage and implement **waste management** and cleaner production initiatives in Taranaki consistent with the *Regional Waste Strategy for Taranaki*.

In 2009/2010 the waste minimisation programme will continue, in conjunction with the region's district councils, including employing a waste minimisation officer to assist sector leaders in exploring and implementing waste minimisation initiatives.

- Promote **sustainable land management** and **riparian management** by providing property planning services, in conjunction with landowners, that identify actions for land use management on an individual property basis. The Council intends by the end of the period of this *Plan*, to have active or completed riparian plans in place for over 90% of dairy farms and active comprehensive farm plans in place for over 80% of sheep and beef farms. In ten years the Council expects to have supplied approximately three million plants – mostly native species – to holders of these plans to support its sustainable land management programme, making it one of the largest water and soil management programmes in New Zealand.

During 2009/2010 the Council will prepare comprehensive, agroforestry and conservation farm plans covering not less than an additional 10,000 hectares from an estimated 25 properties and complete riparian management plans covering not less than an additional 250 kilometres from an estimated 50 properties. Approximately 350,000 plants will be supplied to plan holders for planting. The Council will continue to provide timely, high quality advice to promote sustainable land and water management throughout Taranaki.

- Maintain and enhance the indigenous **biodiversity** of the Taranaki region, working alongside landowners and other groups and agencies in accordance with the Council's policies and biodiversity strategy priorities.

During 2009/2010 the Council will prepare, monitor and report on the implementation of at least 10 biodiversity plans and complete a review of coastal areas to identify key native ecosystem sites.

- Promote the protection of the environment through a programme of **enhancement grants**.

The Council will continue to use environmental enhancement grants for the protection of regionally significant or important wetlands or parts of the environment identified as regionally significant.

BIOSECURITY

- Prepare, adopt and maintain a comprehensive suite of legally compliant, high quality and publicly considered **policies, plans and strategies** that will deliver to the Taranaki community, efficient and effective management of the Council's biosecurity functions.

In 2009/2010 both the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals* and the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants* will continue to be operative. No reviews of these strategies are required in 2009/2010.

- Control **pest animals** to minimize their adverse effects on biodiversity, primary production and the regional economy and environment in accordance with the Council's approved regional pest animal management strategy. By the end of the period of this *Plan* the Council's *self-help possum control programme*, implemented in partnership with land occupiers, will be extended to cover greater than 90% of the Taranaki ring plain and northern and southern coastal terraces, incorporating approximately 5,000 properties over an area of approximately 300,000 hectares.

In 2009/2010 the Council will, as part of its *self-help possum control programme*, ensure that landholders maintain possum populations within acceptable limits on the 228,000 hectares of land already within the programme and undertake control work on approximately 25,500 ha of land adjacent to Egmont National Park within the programme in conjunction with the Department of Conservation's retreatment of the Egmont National Park.

- Control and/or eradicate **pest plants** to minimize their adverse effects on biodiversity, primary production and the regional economy and environment in accordance with the Council's approved regional pest plant management strategy.

In 2009/2010 the Council will undertake the direct control and eradication of all known infestations of *Senegal Tea*, *Climbing Spindleberry*, *Mignonette Vine*, *Giant Reed* and *Darwin's Barberry* in the region, confine the spread of or reduce the extent of 'eradication' and 'containment' pest plants through a programme of inspections and where necessary enforcement on all properties and take necessary actions on all pest plant complaints.



AT A GLANCE

TRANSPORT

- Promote an integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable **land transport system** for Taranaki, promote the provision of community **passenger transport** in Taranaki and assist the special transport needs of the transport disadvantaged. The Council will promote **safe navigation** for all users of the waters of Port Taranaki.

Specifically in 2009/2010, the Council will complete a comprehensive review of the *Regional Land Transport Strategy for Taranaki* and the *Regional Passenger Transport Plan*. The Council will continue to operate and substantially extend passenger transport services in New Plymouth urban areas and regional Taranaki and the total mobility subsidy assistance programme subject to funding approval processes. The Council will continue to provide harbourmaster and harbour warden services for Port Taranaki to implement relevant harbour bylaws and regulations.

HAZARD MANAGEMENT

- Promote and enhance within the Taranaki community, an integrated, comprehensive **civil defence emergency management** system.

Specifically in 2009/2010, the Council will implement the *Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan for Taranaki* and the *2009/2010 Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Annual Business Plan*.

- Manage and maintain the Waitara and Waiwhakaiho **flood protection schemes** and manage other minor **river control schemes** to accepted or agreed design standards to minimize and prevent damage by floods and river erosion. The Council will continue to provide accurate and timely flood warnings, flood control advice and undertake minor works and associated actions to minimise and prevent damage by floods and river erosion.

In addition to generally maintaining the current Waitara and Waiwhakaiho flood protection schemes, the Council will complete investigations into increasing flood protection on the Waiwhakaiho River flood control scheme from 2% annual exceedance probability to 1% (that is raise the flood protection provided by the scheme from a 1 in 50 year event to a 1 in 100 year event) and subject to asset management plan agreement, implement the necessary works programme (2009/2010 to 2012/2013). The Council will monitor rainfall and river levels and issue timely flood warnings.

RECREATION, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- Facilitate the redevelopment of Rugby Park into Yarrow Stadium and ensure that **Hollard Gardens** and **Tupare** are maintained as regionally significant recreational and heritage amenities.

In 2009/2010 the Council will continue repayment of the grant made for redevelopment of Yarrow Stadium, maintain of Tupare and Hollard gardens to the standards established in asset management plans and encourage the increased use of these two regionally significant garden facilities.

- Maintain an ongoing partnership relationship with the **Puke Ariki** regional museum and library including the ongoing use of display and presentation material within an annual project

In 2009/2010 the Council will agree and deliver upon an annual project in partnership with Puke Ariki.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATION, ADVOCACY AND INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

- Ensure that the Council-owned port company, **Port Taranaki Ltd** is efficiently managed as a successful business and that **property and treasury investments** owned by the Council are efficiently managed. The Council will seek to attain at least a 6% return on land and treasury investments over the period of this *Plan*.

The Council has reviewed its investment policy in relation to endowment properties. For residential properties, if the leaseholder wishes to purchase the property then it will be offered for sale at market valuation. If the leaseholder does not wish to purchase the property then the Council will retain the property. For commercial and industrial properties the Council will review the ownership and management of these properties with Port Taranaki Ltd. If there is strategic value to both the Council and Port Taranaki Ltd, the Council will either sell the properties or transfer management of the leases to Port Taranaki Ltd at market valuation. Following this process the Council may offer the properties for sale to the current leaseholder at market valuation. Other than the above scenarios, the Council will retain ownership of the properties unless there is a conflict of interest between the Council's role as a regulator and its role as a landlord.



AT A GLANCE

- Promote community awareness and understanding of the Council's functions and activities and make quality and timely **information** publicly available. This area of activity will include further development of the Council's website. The Council will continue its **environmental education** programme where over the period of this plan, the Council expects to involve approximately 50,000 school students in class visits, field trips and visits to the Council's display areas.

Specifically in 2009/2010 the Council will publish and distribute regular editions of the *Recount* newsletter to over 1,000 stakeholders, maintain the Council's website and implement an environmental awards programme. At least 150 school class visits or field trips will be undertaken with approximately 1,000 people visiting the Council's display areas.

The Council is to establish a council-controlled organisation with other regional councils for the purposes of collaboratively developing and maintaining a software application suite for common use by regional councils in the delivery of their activities. Such collaboration reduces risk and cost to the Council. This is part of the Council's commitment to having the highest quality of information available to allow informed decisions to be made across its range of functions.

- Ensure that **public representation** by the Council and its Committees is carried out effectively and efficiently in accordance with statutory requirements and **advocate** on behalf of the Taranaki community on matters of regional interest or concern.
- Over the 10-year life of this Plan the Council intends to retain a strong **financial position** with no public debt and maintain sound **financial performance** with minimum required rate increases.

Specifically for 2009/2010 the general rate will increase by \$184,996. The uniform annual general charge will increase from \$38.25 to \$42.00. Rates for Yarrow Stadium remain unchanged from last year. River control and flood protection targeted rates will increase by \$47,678 to fund the increase in the protection offered by the Waiwhakaiho River flood control scheme and targeted rates for passenger transport services will increase by \$223,376 to fund the further development of passenger transport services. The net effect of these changes is less than \$10 in Council rates increases for the average residential ratepayer across the region.



PURPOSE

The Taranaki Regional Council's *Long-Term Council Community Plan* for 2009/2019 is the third such plan to be prepared by the Council under the Local Government Act 2002. This Plan is important to you because it presents the Council's strategic directions and programmes for the next decade.

As the name suggests, the *Long-Term Council Community Plan* is a document put together by the Council and the community. In it you will find a description of the activities the Council will be engaged in over the next ten years, the objectives of those activities and their costs as accurately as can be forecast over this period. The *Plan* also describes how the Council, through its various activities and programmes will contribute to achieving the long-term outcomes for the community that the community itself has identified. Many of these activities focus on ensuring that Taranaki's natural environment and physical resources are sustainably managed for the long-term benefit of the community. Others such as the Council's transport planning and passenger transport services contribute to efficient infrastructure and movement of people and goods so vital to economic development.

The Council's work in recreation and heritage, particularly its involvement in the development of Yarrow Stadium and regionally important gardens such as Tupare and Hollard Gardens provide important amenities for the people of the region, protect our heritage and promote tourism. These contribute to a vibrant Taranaki.

Ongoing improvements in our river control and flood protection schemes planned for the next few years and in enhancing our civil defence and emergency management capabilities will see Taranaki become an even more safe and secure place for people and families to live, work and play.

The *Plan* also describes how the Council with the help of the community and other organisations will work together to achieve these community outcomes. The section of this *Plan* entitled, *Looking to the future: working together to achieve community outcomes*, tells you more about this.

There are a number of other more specific documents, plans and strategies that the Council has in place to help it carry out its work. These are also prepared and reviewed in consultation with the community. This *Long-Term Council Community Plan* provides a basis for integrating and coordinating the activities and resources of the Council over the long-term. It provides an opportunity for you, the community, to have a say in these long-term plans.

Under the Local Government Act 2002, the Council is required to produce a long-term council community plan every three years, covering the next 10-year period. The Council is also required to prepare an annual plan for each financial year it does not prepare a long-term council community plan. The annual plans prepared in the years after the long-term council community plan will largely contain budget, funding and financial statements for that year in support of the long-term council community plan. The Council is required to prepare and adopt its next long-term council community plan by 30 June 2012.

The community outcomes contained within the Council's long-term council community plan are reviewed every six years to ensure the Council is on track. Progress towards achieving these outcomes is reported on every 3 years.

The emphasis in preparing this *Plan* has been to produce a straight-forward easy to read document. The *Plan* has been structured in the following way to help readers understand the long-term proposals of the Council:

- Introduction – a brief description of what the plan is about.
- Audit report – independent opinion on the extent to which this *Plan* complies with the Local Government Act 2002, the quality of the information and assumptions underlying this *Plan*, and the extent to which this *Plan* provides a meaningful assessment of the levels of service to be provided for each activity.
- Looking to the future – an explanation of community outcomes and how the Council will contribute to those outcomes.
- Taranaki region – key factors concerning the environment in which the Council operates.
- Assumptions – the underlying basis upon which this *Plan* was prepared.
- Groups of activities – the background, objectives, performance measures and budgets for each of the Council's activities.
- Funding and financial policies – the financial framework by which the Council operates and under which this *Plan* was prepared.
- Financial statements – the planned financial performance and position of the Council for the next ten years.
- Funding impact statement – the effect that this *Plan* will have on the ratepayers of the region.
- Explanatory notes – additional financial information.
- Developing Māori capacity – the processes by which the capacity of Māori to contribute to the decision-making processes is fostered.
- Appendices – additional policies and financial information.
- Submissions – how to be involved in the submission process and submission form.

The information included in the *Plan* has been prepared for the sole purpose of producing a long-term council community plan. The information contained in the *Plan* may not be suitable for other purposes.

The Council welcomes your input into this *Long-Term Council Community Plan*.

PLANNING PROCESSES

Figure 1: The Taranaki Regional Council planning processes.

