

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Council Structure
Confusing

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It is astounding to keep seeing the suggestion that somehow Far North Mayor Wayne Brown and I convinced New Zealand's foremost expert on local government, Peter McKinlay, to put his name to our ideas on Northland's local government.

While I am flattered that some think I wrote such a scholarly report, here is what Mr McKinlay said at a public meeting when that allegation surfaced: "We do not put our company's reputation at risk to satisfy the whim of a couple of mayors in regional New Zealand" — which puts the allegations firmly in their place.

It was the Northland Regional Council which initiated the report, stating in a submission to WDC's LTCCP that it wanted a review in which "we should not be restricted in our thinking". Public meetings are making it clear the NRC's later decision not to be involved has not pleased many.

It needs to be understood that the review does not divvy up "NRC assets" and they have nothing to do with the governance review.

Those assets do not belong to the NRC. They belong to the people of Northland and, after any reorganisation unitary authorities, would manage those assets for the benefit of Northlanders. As a former regional councillor, I have been in the NRC's offices many times when front office staff have taken a call, listened, and then said: "Sorry, you need to ring the district council about that."

We don't need two layers of local government to take care of our community. It confuses people. I wish to see district council staff teaming with regional council staff in a merged unitary authority which does the job more effectively. I am not anti the regional council; I am pro the people of Northland.

What is before us is bigger and will last much longer than any individual politician. What I want to see is a local government structure which will take Northland forward and improve its economic performance. I urge people to make a submission on the structure they think will work best.

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