

I attended the Thursday Whangarei meeting called by the WDC regarding changes to local government being mooted and in particular relating to unitary authorities. It was well attended and apart from a few irrelevant questions, it was a good and informative meeting.

The two questions I came away with from this meeting were: 1. When questioned, the WDC staff admitted that there had been no research into how the existing Unitary Authorities were performing — this to me was very remiss especially when Bill Rossiter, NRC councillor, rose to his feet and reported that he had done some research, and found that the Unitary Authorities were collecting on average about \$700 per year more from their ratepayers than WDC ratepayers. We need to know more about whether these existing authorities are better or worse off, because changing the system of local government will no doubt be expensive.

2. When it was suggested that council get involved more with the younger generation through the schools and Northtec, it was obvious that this was not being done. I would suggest that this is a major part of their job, informing future ratepayers.

It is sad that the current council have not continued with Council Expo — this was one good way of attracting and informing younger people.

I would like to encourage more Whangarei people to look at this project, get informed as to how changes may affect our environment, and deliver submissions to WDC before the end of May. Any change will not be cheap and we all know who will pay!

ANN SHAW
Whangarei.