



LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
MANA KĀWANGATANGA Ā ROHE

Media Release

9 September 2010

**COMMISSION SEEKS VIEWS ON PROPOSAL FOR
UNION OF NELSON CITY AND TASMAN DISTRICT**

The Local Government Commission is calling for submissions on the proposal for the union of Nelson City and Tasman District. The proposal was initiated by a petition signed by more than 10% of the electors of Nelson City and more than 10% of electors of Tasman District.

Submissions may be made on any matter relevant to the proposal, including –

- Whether or not the proposal should proceed;
- Whether some variation of the proposal should be adopted;
- the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal compared to the status quo; and
- If the proposal is implemented, details that could be included in a draft reorganisation scheme such as representation arrangements and community board structures and functions.

The closing date for submissions is Monday 8 November 2010.

After the closing date for submissions the process is as follows –

- The Commission gives the submissions received to the 'representative of electors' (representative of those who signed the petition) and provides the opportunity for the representative to withdraw the proposal.
- If the proposal is not withdrawn the Commission will likely meet with the affected and adjoining local authorities, the representative of electors, relevant government agencies, affected Māori organisations and those

other people and organisations who have made submissions. This is usually done at a hearing or hearings in the affected areas.

- The Commission may carry out other investigations and inquiries so that it has enough information on which to make a decision.
- The Commission then decides whether to issue a draft reorganisation scheme (based on the proposal or on a modification or variation of the proposal) or not to proceed with the proposal.
- If the Commission issues a draft reorganisation scheme it then invites submissions on the draft scheme. The scheme includes the detail of how a proposal would be implemented.
- The Commission considers submissions received on the draft. It then decides whether to issue a final reorganisation scheme based on the draft scheme (with or without modifications) or to decline to proceed with the scheme.
- If the Commission issued a final reorganisation scheme, two polls are held, one poll of the electors of Nelson City and one poll of the electors of Tasman District.
- If polls are required, a final scheme would be put into effect if a majority of those who vote in *each* poll are in favour of the final scheme.

An information sheet, map, and a copy of a letter accompanying the proposal/petition is contained on the Commission's website www.lgc.govt.nz (click 'current proposals').

Media inquiries:

Donald Riezebos
Chief Executive Officer
Local Government Commission

Phone: 04 494 0552
Email: info@lgc.govt.nz



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
MANA KĀWANGATANGA Ā ROHE**

**PROPOSAL FOR THE UNION OF TASMAN DISTRICT
AND NELSON CITY**

INFORMATION SHEET
(seven pages)

9 September 2010

Contact details

Local Government Commission
PO Box 5362
Wellington

Phone 04-494 0552

Fax 04-494 0501

e-mail lgc@lgc.govt.nz

website www.lgc.govt.nz

The Proposal

The Local Government Commission has received a proposal for the union of Nelson City and Tasman District.

The proposal was initiated by a petition signed by over 10% of the electors of Nelson City and by over 10% of the electors of Tasman District.

A copy of the letter from Aldo Miccio accompanying the reorganisation proposal/petition forms can be found on the Commission's website www.lgc.govt.nz (click 'current proposals'). This contains arguments from him for the proposal. A map of the affected area is also on the Commission's website.

The Process

The procedure the Commission must use to deal with the proposal is set out in subpart 4 of Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002. That procedure is briefly summarised below.

- The Commission invites public submissions on the proposal. The Commission is now calling for submissions with a closing date of Monday 8 November 2010. (Information about how to lodge a submission is set out later in this document.)
- The Commission gives the submissions received to the 'representative of electors' (representative of those who signed the petition) and provides an opportunity for the representative to withdraw the proposal.
- If the proposal is not withdrawn the Commission will likely meet with the affected and adjoining local authorities, the representative of electors, relevant government agencies, affected Māori organisations and those other people and organisations who have made submissions. This is usually done at a hearing or hearings in the affected areas.
- The Commission may carry out other investigations and inquiries so that it has enough information on which to make a decision.
- The Commission then decides whether to issue a draft reorganisation scheme (based on the proposal or on a modification or variation of the proposal) or not to proceed with the proposal.
- If the Commission issues a draft reorganisation scheme it then invites submissions on the draft scheme. The scheme includes the detail of how a proposal would be implemented.

- The Commission considers submissions received on the draft. It then decides whether to issue a final reorganisation scheme based on the draft scheme (with or without modifications) or to decline to proceed with the scheme.
- If the Commission issued a final reorganisation scheme, two polls are held, one poll of the electors of Nelson City and one poll of the electors of Tasman District.
- If polls are required, a final scheme would be implemented if a majority of those who vote in *each* poll are in favour of the final scheme.

How will the Commission decide?

When making decisions on the proposal, the Commission is required to satisfy itself that the proposal will meet the criteria set out in clauses 3 to 7 of Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002. Broadly speaking, these criteria relate to 'good local government', boundaries and representation. The criteria are contained in Attachment A of this document. In order to assess whether a reorganisation proposal will promote 'good local government' in a particular area, the Commission has identified the following questions that need to be addressed:

- (a) How would the proposed districts/regions better recognise distinct communities of interest?
- (b) How would the proposal provide for more effective representation of communities of interest?
- (c) Why would the proposal provide for more effective governance of the districts/regions concerned including meeting decision-making requirements?
- (d) Why would the proposal facilitate more effective planning for meeting the immediate and long-term needs of the districts/regions concerned?
- (e) How would the proposal facilitate more efficient and effective service delivery in the districts/regions concerned?
- (f) How would the proposal provide for enhanced financial capacity in the districts/regions concerned?
- (g) How would the proposal provide for enhanced local government management and organisational capacity in the districts/regions concerned?

Making a Submission

Any person or organisation wishing to make a submission to the Local Government Commission on the proposal may do so by **Monday 8 November 2010**.

Submissions may be made on any matter relevant to the proposal, including:

- Whether or not the proposal should proceed;
- Whether some variation of the proposal should be adopted;
- the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal compared to the status quo; and
- If the proposal is implemented, details that could be included in a draft reorganisation scheme such as representation arrangements and community board structures and functions.

Submissions may be forwarded to the Commission by:

- Post: Chief Executive Officer
Local Government Commission
PO Box 5362
WELLINGTON 6145
- Fax: 04 494 0501
- Email: info@lgc.govt.nz

Anyone making a submission should clearly state whether they wish to meet with the Commission to speak about their submission (along with a daytime contact telephone number). If this information is not provided, the Commission may assume that the submitter does not wish to appear at a hearing.

Please note that it has been the Commission's practice to make submissions publicly available on its website.

Further Information

The Local Government Commission comprises three members appointed by the Minister of Local Government. Its main tasks are to make decisions about the structure of local government and on representation arrangements for local authorities. More information about the Commission may be found on its website – www.lgc.govt.nz (click the 'About us' link)

The Commission will maintain a website page dedicated to this proposal and will periodically update this. You can access this page by clicking on the 'current proposals' link.

Statutory criteria for considering reorganisation proposals (clauses 3 to 7 of Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002)

Promoting good local government (Clause 3 of Schedule 3)

1. In order to proceed with the proposal, the Local Government Commission must:
 - (a) *be satisfied that it will promote good local government of the districts concerned; and*
 - (b) *ensure that each local authority provided for under the proposal will:*
 - (i) *have the resources necessary to carry out its responsibilities, duties and powers,*
 - (ii) *have a district or region appropriate for the efficient and effective performance of its role as specified in section 11 of the Act,*
 - (iii) *contain within its district or region a sufficiently distinct community of interest or sufficiently distinct communities of interests, and*
 - (iv) *be able to meet the requirements of section 76 of the Act, which relate to decision-making.*
2. When considering these criteria, the Commission must take into account:
 - *the area of impact of the responsibilities, duties, and powers of the local authorities concerned;*
 - *the area of benefit of services provided;*
 - *the likely effects on any local authority of excluding any area from its district or region; and*
 - *any other appropriate matters.*

Boundaries (Clause 4 of Schedule 3)

3. In determining the boundaries under a proposal or scheme, the Commission, must ensure that (where practicable):
 - *the boundaries of regions conform with water catchments; and*
 - *the boundaries of territorial authority districts conform with the boundaries of regions.*
4. Boundaries of regions and territorial authority districts must also conform with the boundaries of statistical meshblock areas determined by Statistics New Zealand and used for parliamentary electoral purposes.

5. In practical terms, the Commission may request Statistics New Zealand to split meshblocks if it believes this is appropriate. The fact that proposed boundaries do not initially conform with meshblocks does not mean that they cannot be considered. But before the Commission can issue a reorganisation scheme, boundaries must conform with meshblocks.

Representation (Clause 5 of Schedule 3)

6. When considering a proposal or a scheme, the Commission must ensure that the membership of a local authority will:
- *provide fair and effective representation for individuals and communities of the local authority;*
 - *comply with the requirements of the Local Electoral Act 2001 (see particularly Part 1A of that Act); and*
 - *take into account the responsibilities, duties, and powers of the local authority.*

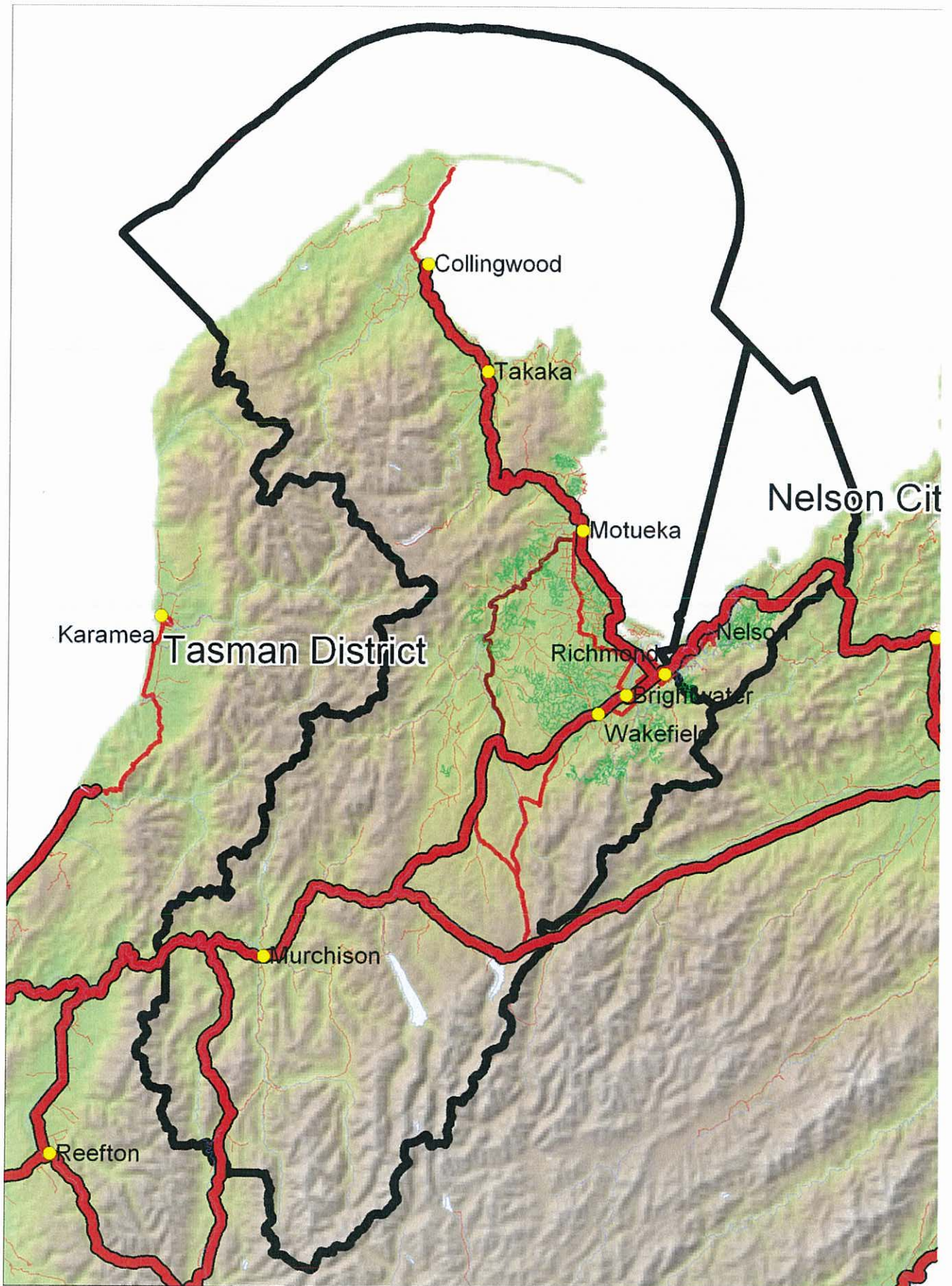
The role of, and guiding principles for, local authorities (sections 10, 11, 14, and 76 to 82 of the Local Government Act 2002)

7. When considering 'good local government', the Commission will take into account the role of local authorities and the principles guiding how a local authority must perform this role.
8. Under section 11 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act), the role of a local authority is to give effect, in relation to its district or region, to the purpose of local government stated in section 10 of the Act, and to perform the duties, and exercise the rights, conferred on it under the Act and any other enactment (such as the Resource Management Act 1991).
9. The purpose of local government, as outlined in section 10, is to:
- (a) *enable democratic local decision-making and action, by, and on behalf of, communities; and*
 - (b) *to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future.*
10. The principles guiding how a local authority must perform its role are set out in section 14 of the Act, as follows:
- (1) *In performing its role, a local authority must act in accordance with the following principles:*
 - (a) *a local authority should—*
 - (i) *conduct its business in an open, transparent, and democratically accountable manner; and*
 - (ii) *give effect to its identified priorities and desired outcomes in an efficient and effective manner:*

- (b) *a local authority should make itself aware of, and should have regard to, the views of all of its communities; and*
- (c) *when making a decision, a local authority should take account of—*
 - (i) *the diversity of the community, and the community's interests, within its district or region; and*
 - (ii) *the interests of future as well as current communities; and*
 - (iii) *the likely impact of any decision on each aspect of well-being referred to in section 10:*
- (d) *a local authority should provide opportunities for Māori to contribute to its decision-making processes:*
- (e) *a local authority should collaborate and co-operate with other local authorities and bodies as it considers appropriate to promote or achieve its priorities and desired outcomes, and make efficient use of resources; and*
- (f) *a local authority should undertake any commercial transactions in accordance with sound business practices; and*
- (g) *a local authority should ensure prudent stewardship and the efficient and effective use of its resources in the interests of its district or region; and*
- (h) *in taking a sustainable development approach, a local authority should take into account—*
 - (i) *the social, economic, and cultural well-being of people and communities; and*
 - (ii) *the need to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment; and*
 - (iii) *the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations.*

(2) If any of these principles, or any aspects of well-being referred to in section 10, are in conflict in any particular case, the local authority should resolve the conflict in accordance with the principle in subsection (1)(a)(i).

11. Sections 76 to 82 of the Act set out the principles and requirements needed for local authority decision-making and consultation. Broadly speaking, these sections of the Act reinforce the principles set out above.



Donald Riezebos
Chief Executive Officer
The Local Government Commission
PO Box 5362
Wellington



6 July, 2010

Dear Donald

Please find enclosed the re sent petition calling for a review of Council amalgamation options for Nelson and Tasman. We are proud to have exceeded the 10% signature threshold in both regions, and direct feedback from residents proves to us that there is a strong mandate for an independent study by the Local Government Commission into a union of the two councils (Nelsons City and Tasman District councils) in order to achieve a better governance model– an even greater mandate than the 10%+ of signatures collected.

In fact, Nelson MP Nick Smith's annual survey at the end of last year stated, "*There is majority support for a study on the merits of merging Tasman and Nelson councils with 56% in favour. This result confirms my long-held view that our region and ratepayers would benefit from a comprehensive study.*" Meanwhile, a Nelson Mail-run survey after we launched the petition showed more than 70% supported the petition.

There is also strong support of your investigation within the Nelson City Council and, despite some media stories, there is support within the Tasman District Council, so we anticipate your investigation and consultation road to be smooth.

Why we have sent this proposal

Myself and those who signed this petition seek your investigation into a union model, as we want to see once and for all if amalgamation can provide fair representation and better governance for the entire region (urban and rural) and fair resource allocation.

For this region to move forward in the right direction - to become a place future generations can be proud of - we all need clear regional priorities, common planning rules, and common processes for all groups that deal with council. The opportunity cost that the region has endured from suboptimal and delayed decision-making has been great. It is commonly accepted that we are one community of interest and we need to maximize our potential through a governance model that delivers regional cohesion. The current model is failing in all these areas and costing the ratepayers in many respects.

One community of interest

The region is clearly one community of interest, geographically and culturally. For example, there are no real geographical boundaries between Nelson and Tasman; 90% of the population of both council areas lives within a maximum 30 minute commute from each other. We share the same workforce and industries, as well as customers, services and infrastructure. The Nelson port is the primary transport route for our large Tasman-based horticultural and agricultural industries. Currently, all our businesses, large or small, including Iwi, must deal with two councils and two sets of bureaucracy, which leads to increased cost of business in terms of compliance and opportunity cost.

We need to act strategically as a wider region, because we are also culturally one community of interest; many residents attend schools outside the council area they live in; and, even our sports clubs and organisations, recreational activities and competitions are run as one for the entire Nelson Bays / Tasman region. These activities do not know the council boundaries, and yet are forced to always deal with two councils.

We envisage that One Council would be able to prioritise what the community as a whole views as important, ensuring a fair allocation of resources across the entire region. It is critical that fair resource allocation and priority setting occurs for the entire region.

Missed opportunities

Experience shows that the region suffers from many missed opportunities. For example, a single Nelson Tasman Council could have helped the community achieve:

1. A cohesive Regional Land Transport Committee structure, process and strategy.
2. Cost effective recreational and commercial developments.
3. An efficient regional bus service.
4. The upgrade of Whangamoia Hill Road.
5. A joint regional recycling programme.
6. A regional conference centre that meets public demand.
7. Shared responsibility for security of water supply for the Waimea basin.
8. An agreed funding model for Motueka River's stop banks.
9. Effective, strategic, and integrated regional brand initiatives.
10. Cost effective venue management and marketing of all council facilities.
11. Effective procurement of government grants.
12. An expedient upgrade of the new sewerage pipeline.

We need to start looking at major projects and ranking them in order of community and regional importance. We do not do this at present.

Direct savings

There are the opportunity costs plus some direct costs whenever both councils work together on an issue. For example, joint committee meetings have no delegation of powers, so findings are sent back to each council to accept or not accept. If agreement cannot be reached by both councils then projects often stall or halt completely, making the entire joint committee process a waste of time and money. This also occurs when it comes to decision-making around entities that both councils have 50% share holdings in.

Signature collection process

As you are aware, signature collecting commenced in late July last year, when we directed the bulk of our volunteers' energy initially to Nelson. We then paused before directing our energy to the Tasman region in October and November, when we particularly enjoyed some successful days collecting signatures in the Tasman area at the regional A & P show, and it was at this weekend show where we collected the majority of Tasman signatures. When people met with us and understood the sentiment behind what we wish the Commission's investigation to achieve, they are more than willing to sign, despite what newspaper reports of a few Tasman District Council voices would lead you to believe.

In December, we started the time-consuming job of checking and data entering, which I informed the Local Electoral Officers about, as our goal is to save them precious time and to help create a smooth process for them.

Now more recently in June after having the petition was certified in Nelson we set about collecting the balance signatures for Tasman, which together with the previously gathered signatures have been sent in today 7 th July 2010.

As you are no doubt aware I and many others are committed to seeing this investigation happen for our region. It is an uninformed debate we have been having for generations, and right now the region is hungry to be informed, so we can decide once and for all what we need to move forward together.

History shows us we will always face issues that affect the entire region, and with all the best intentions these may not be addressed satisfactorily into the future under the current two-Council model. An efficient local government that delivers on rate payers' expectations is what is best for the Nelson Tasman region. There is a need to effectively utilise rate payers' funds to: deliver core services; improve well-being for all our residents; facilitate growth in the local economies; and actively attract business and non-business visitors to the region.

I do believe your investigation will show us clear benefits for amalgamation, and I do believe the electorate will vote for the union model you present us. The region deserves and wants the option of a single Council.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Miccio', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Aldo Miccio

Why people signed the Our Place, Our Choice petition

“A region the size of Nelson does not need two councils. It is ridiculous. While there are two Councils we will continue not to have the facilities we should, and Nelson will continue to fall behind regions of a similar size. Just look what Marlborough has done, with its events centre and conference theatre facilities.”

‘I live in Tasman but do business in Nelson, where both Tasman and Nelson people also do work. We are all one region – any other view is archaic. I think a study will show us we can benefit from being governed by one Council.’

“Amalgamation is a logical outcome to maximize our resources, given the area and population”

“I signed the petition because I do not feel there are any real boundaries between Tasman and Nelson. I live in Nelson city, but when I visit friends or enjoy activities outside of the city, I just feel that I am heading to the countryside, not a different region. The flow of people from city to countryside is constant - we all travel on the same roads, use each other's facilities, work in each other's townships and enjoy each other's company, and yet we are governed by different bodies who I don't see are contributing equally to the region's infrastructure. Also, from time to time council processes seem to become unstuck, which holds regional development up - roads are a case in point. This is extremely frustrating for all involved, and it surely can't be efficient. This is why I would like to see more details about how one council could work for us.”

“Because we need to have the ability to share resources and costs.”

“We live in 2009, not 1950's parochialism. If Banks Peninsula can survive, then Tasman can. We are regional in our daily activity patterns – this is the way we live our lives, shop, entertain, leave / enter our area and recreate – not them and us. We can have 100,000 as our rating base, but more important stop infighting over our limited resources.”

OUR PLACE OUR CHOICE

Tasman's voice

"Our rural rates are too high. This is unsustainable and establishes a need for the Tasman and Nelson Councils to pool their resources. The petition for a review of council amalgamation options is our chance to achieve this. Amalgamation won't necessarily happen, but the petition will enable us to explore options going forward. I urge you to join me in signing this petition. Let's put the issues on the table, and we will get the say."

Michael Higgins, TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

"I support the petition seeking a review of Council amalgamation – because it's our chance to review the governance we want for Nelson-Tasman. Other local authorities have empowered community boards. This petition is our opportunity to consider models that can bring responsive governance closer to our communities. I encourage you to sign this petition so that a study is undertaken and we can see the options. This way we will get to have the say."

Joe Bell, CHAIRMAN OF THE GOLDEN BAY COMMUNITY BOARD

"The petition for a review of Council amalgamation could be our only chance to have a say in the governance we want for Nelson-Tasman in the long-term. Currently, rates are hurting local families – how are we going to keep them affordable? We need to look at the alternatives for governing our region – and this offers us our one chance to do this. I urge you to join me in signing this petition so we can see the options – because this way – we get the say."

Jack Inglis, TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FROM MOTUEKA

"As co-owner of a business in the Tasman District I'm really hoping we have the opportunity to choose the future of our own local government. In Nelson-Tasman we spend so much energy arguing about who's going to support the facilities we already have and those we need – there has to be a better way. This is OUR region – we should have a say in the future of its governance. I urge you to join me in signing the petition seeking a review of Council amalgamation so we can see the options – because this way – we get the say."

Judy Finn, NEUDORF VINEYARDS

Step 1: 10% of Nelson/Tasman registered electors sign the petition

Step 2: The Local Government Commission investigates and consults, and may then draft a reorganisation scheme

Step 3: Residents vote on the final recommended scheme, or the status quo

SIGN THE PETITION

Aldo Miccio

OUR PLACE OUR CHOICE

WHAT IS THIS PETITION ABOUT?

The petition for a review of Council amalgamation options, is your chance to have the best governance model to move the Nelson Tasman region forward, in the right direction.

THE PROCESS IS:

Step 1: 10% of Nelson/Tasman registered electors sign this petition

Step 2: The Local Government Commission investigates, drafts a reorganisation scheme, and consults at no cost to rate payers

Step 3: Residents vote on the recommended scheme, or the status quo.

It's about our region, our place and what is best for all Nelson Tasman residents.

LET THE COMMUNITY DECIDE

If this petition is successful, and the Commission investigates, it would be the first time we would see in detail what a union between Nelson and Tasman Councils might look like, and then all residents would get to vote on the proposed model through a poll. The region deserves the right to choose.

All this petition needs are signatures of 10% of Nelson and 10% of Tasman registered electors, in accordance with the Local Government Act (2002), for the independent Local Government Commission to investigate, draft a reorganisation scheme for consultation and then prepare a final scheme for the region to vote on.

THE REGION NEEDS:

1. A single, shared identity and purpose.
2. Maximised opportunities across the region.
3. Transparency and accountability.
4. Responsiveness to the community's needs.
5. Greater economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing.
6. Cost effectiveness.

ONE REGION ONE VISION

It is believed that amalgamation would provide fair representation for the entire region (urban and rural) and fair resource allocation. To move forward in the right direction, we all need clear regional priorities, common planning rules, and common processes for all groups that deal with Council.

There are no real geographical boundaries between Nelson and Tasman. We share the same workforce and industries, as well as customers, services and infrastructure. History shows us we will always face issues that affect the entire region, and with all the best intentions these may not be addressed satisfactorily into the future under the current two-Council model.

We need to act strategically as a wider region, because we are one community of interest. One region and one vision.

An efficient local government that delivers on rate payers' expectations is what is best for the Nelson Tasman region. There is a need to effectively utilise rate payers' funds to: deliver core services; improve well-being for all our residents; grow the local economies; and actively attract business and non-business visitors to the region.

The region deserves the option of a single Council.

Our place, our choice.

Aldo Miccio

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

1. Is Nelson Tasman actually one community?

Yes. We are more than just one area geographically. We are one community of interest. The same workforce is shared, with many Tasman residents working in Nelson and vice versa. Our industries work and employ across the artificial boundary. The Nelson port is the primary transport route for our large Tasman-based horticultural and agricultural industries. We share a tourism industry. Many residents attend schools outside the Council area they live in. And, even our sports clubs and organisations, and recreational activities and competitions are united.

2. How could we maximise regional opportunities better?

A single Nelson Tasman Council could help the community achieve:

1. A cohesive Regional Land Transport Committee structure, process and strategy.
2. Inspirational recreational and commercial developments along Rocks Road.
3. An efficient regional bus service.
4. The upgrade of Whangamoia Hill Road.
5. A joint regional recycling programme.
6. A regional conference centre and town hall that meet public demand.
7. Shared responsibility for security of water supply for the Waimea basin.
8. An agreed funding model for Motueka River's stop banks.
9. Effective, strategic, and integrated regional brand initiatives.
10. Good venue management and marketing of all Council facilities.
11. Effective procurement of government grants.
12. An expedient upgrade of the new sewerage pipeline.
13. The ability for Golden Bay, Motueka and Murchison residents to better participate.

3. How would one Council be better able to maximise opportunities for the entire region?

One Council would be able to prioritise what the community as a whole views as important, ensuring a fair allocation of resources across the entire region.

4. What would a successful union look like?

This is what the Local Government Commission would investigate and draft. Residents could then review and provide feedback on the Commission's draft reorganisation scheme, before a final scheme was put to the vote. The aim would be for greater regional cohesion, enabling the region to progress in a responsive manner, in accordance with the wishes of the wider region's residents.

5. Would we have a chance to say No to the Commission's amalgamation model at the poll?

Yes. The poll would be a simple vote; for either the Commission's recommended draft reorganisation scheme for one Council, or a vote to keep the status quo.

6. Is it important we have representation from the entire region from Murchison to Golden Bay to Motueka to Richmond and Nelson?

Yes. It is critical that fair resource allocation and priority setting occurs for the entire region. A major part of the Commission's

consultation and investigation would be to find the best solutions for our region. We need a system that preserves local decision-making and local accountability with real delegated powers, so representatives can truly represent and respond to local community interests.

7. Will the rates go down?

Not necessarily. There will be cost savings in some areas, but importantly rate payers would see more value and greater efficiencies for their rate money. The level that rates would be set at would be a decision for the new single Council governance group.

8. How does the current way both Councils work together cost us more?

There are the opportunity costs plus some direct costs whenever both Councils work together on an issue. For example, joint committee meetings have no delegation of powers, so findings are sent back to each Council to accept or not accept. If agreement cannot be reached by both Councils then projects often stall or halt completely, making the entire joint committee process a waste of time and money.

9. Who would pay for the Local Government Commission to consult, evaluate and make recommendations?

The Commission would meet the costs associated with any investigations it initiated. All we need to give them is our time.

10. Why can't either Council get the Commission to come and make a recommendation?

Currently, the Tasman District Council has no formal position on a union, and Nelson City Council is considering the issue. However, to ask the Local Government Commission to evaluate a union, both Councils need to agree to do so. It is not an option for one Council to go it alone.

11. Is a petition the only way we can get the Commission to investigate a union?

The Local Government Minister can appoint the Commission to investigate, but due to the work programme involved in creating the Auckland Super Council, the Minister is unlikely to consider Nelson's situation unless this petition is signed by 10% of each Council's electoral voters.

12. Can central government force a union of both Nelson and Tasman Councils?

Yes it can. Central government can legislate that a union occurs, but this is unlikely in this Government's term.

13. Will there be widespread job losses?

No. At worst there may be a sinking lid policy and this predominantly would affect senior management and the elected representatives.

14. Are there examples of successful unions of City Councils in other countries?

Yes. The Royal Commission investigations into Auckland looked at studies in Australia and Canada and it found mixed results. The common factors between the Nelson Tasman region and all successful City Council unions studied were that they were one geographical area, one community of interest and had combined population bases of between 80,000 to 130,000. The region deserves the option of a single Council.

Our place, our choice.