



## Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki

19-04-2022

Mayor Jim Boulton

Queenstown Lakes District Council

Tēnā koe Mayor Boulton

Thank you for your invitation to provide our position to you ahead of Queenstown Lakes District Council's reconsideration of their membership of Communities 4 Local Democracy. We acknowledge your leadership in bringing this back to the council table for discussion.

We wish to start by confirming our support for the Government's proposals for reforming three waters service delivery. As mana whenua, our position is that the reforms are necessary to address many years of underinvestment in three waters infrastructure across the takiwā. For our communities the need is particularly acute. Māori communities have been disproportionately overlooked by councils for reticulated water supply, some still struggle to get clean drinking water, and one-third of Ngāi Tahu settlements do not have reticulated water supply.

Our position is that the reforms will support the provision of equitable, affordable and high-quality water services for all communities, while protecting human health, the environment, and regional economic development. Further, our position is that Māori involvement in governance of the new Water Services Entities will improve water services. Ngāi Tahu have always balanced environmental sustainability, human health and wellbeing, and development since time immemorial through managing traditional waterways. Co-governance will allow Councils and mana whenua to share environmental, cultural, and governance expertise.

In terms of the issue before you we were disappointed at your council's decision in February to join Communities 4 Local Democracy. The issue between us is not your opposition to the reform. We support absolutely your right to oppose the Government's reform programme, but do not support your membership of a grouping that has to date demonstrated no interest in engaging with iwi/Māori. Iwi/Māori were not involved in the development of C4LD's alternative model, and we have seen no evidence to date that their model provides a meaningful way for iwi to participate in three waters governance.

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We value our long, enduring relationship with Queenstown Lakes District Council, however your membership of this ‘splinter’ grouping of councils puts a strain on our local mana whenua relationship with the council. In addition, we expected the Queenstown Lakes District Council to provide local leadership on this important kaupapa. Instead, and in joining Communities 4 Local Democracy, your council has in effect handed over their voice in opposition to the reforms, to the Mayors of Waimakairiri and Manawatu. All our hapū understand the basic tikanga, that we do not hand our ‘mauri’ to others, and we expected the same from yourselves.

In closing, it has been disappointing to us and we expect to you, that much of the public discourse on Three Waters has been based on misunderstandings and misinformation regarding the issue of ownership. Like the wider community, we are concerned about any suggestion of the privatisation of water services. Throughout the reform process, Ngāi Tahu have always backed public ownership of three waters infrastructure and supported increased safeguards against any potential privatisation. The Treaty partnership we have with the Crown is an additional tool we will use to its full potential to thwart any such move.

We have also been concerned at the inaccurate statements conflating the issue of ownership of water with the three waters reforms. While it is correct that there are unresolved issues of iwi/ Māori rights and interests in freshwater, those are separate matters to be addressed between the Crown and iwi/Māori and are unconnected to these reforms

We thank you again for your engagement on this ahead of this month’s council meeting. Your email notes that the views expressed in this letter may be included in the council paper that will support the discussion at the meeting. As a continuation of our good faith engagement, we would like to receive a copy of that paper before it is finalised.

Cyril Gilroy  
Kaiwhakahaere



Justin Tipa  
Chairperson



Matapura Ellison  
Chairperson



Rachel Wesley  
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Jo Brand  
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