

6 December 2023

ORGSTR-1512315375-1886

Hon Simon Watts  
Minister for Climate Change  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Tēnā koe Minister

## **Briefing for Incoming Minister: Delivering action on climate change**

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister for Climate Change.

Greater Wellington Regional Council shares your vision of a New Zealand powered by affordable clean energy and becoming a lower emissions economy. We would like to bring **seven** issues to your attention:

### **Emissions Reduction**

- 1. Invest more in public transport to reduce transport emissions:** Transport is one of New Zealand's largest sources of emissions; funding more public transport not only cuts emissions but provides cleaner and safer urban area and overall lower transport costs. Combining this with well-planned higher density urban development reduces emissions even further by allowing more people to almost eliminate their daily transport emissions.
- 2. Reduce congestion and emissions through national road pricing (congestion charging).** Road pricing has been an effective tool internationally for managing demand on the road network. It can be a key mechanism for encouraging both mode shift away from private vehicles and towards public transport and active modes. It can also change travel behaviour to better use off-peak hours on the road network.
- 3. Use climate policy to drive environmental restoration work:** The current settings of the Emissions Trading Scheme do little to encourage landowners to plant indigenous forest or create or restore wetlands because the returns from planting pines to earn emissions units are much greater. Without changes, the country will end up with a lot of

permanent pine forests but no better biodiversity, cleaner water, or lower gross emissions.

### Climate Change Adaptation

4. **Complete the National Policy Statement on Natural Hazard Decision-making:** This is critical to direct planning authorities on the appropriate weight to attach to natural hazard risk in planning decisions relating to new development. It also sets direction in making adaptation planning a requirement for councils. The lack of direction at present means development is being permitted in harm's way. This will add to the cost of adaptation and is not in the long-term national interest.
5. **Implement the Climate Change Adaptation Bill to prescribe responsibility and funding for managed retreat from high-risk areas:** This will prevent decisions being made in an ad-hoc way in the aftermath of an event, which may be unfair, too slow for affected parties, or set precedents for central and local government which are unaffordable as climate change impacts continue to intensify.
6. **Fund iwi and hapū Māori to undertake climate risk assessments, adaptation planning, emergency response and post-event trauma recovery:** In the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle in Hawkes Bay and Tairāwhiti, iwi leaders stepped up to respond at the "front line" and lead the recovery processes for their communities, Māori, and Pakeha alike. Across New Zealand it is vital for mana whenua to research and manage climate change risks in a manner that meets their respective circumstances, and this requires direct Government funding. Continued Government support for the development of a Māori Climate Platform, in partnership with mana whenua, will enable Māori-led climate action, planning, and solutions that build climate resilience and support community response and recovery nationwide.
7. **Improving flood resilience in the face of climate change** More fully described in *Before the Deluge 2.0*, this co-investment proposal will enable Government and the regional sector to protect infrastructure (roads, bridges, railway lines), people, communities (homes, schools, businesses, public facilities), and productive land from the devastation arising from severe weather events like Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. Investing in flood management infrastructure now will give time for longer term measures such as managed retreat and nature-based solutions to take effect.

Please find attached further information (**Appendix – Further Information**) regarding our partnership with Government and our proposals for your consideration.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these key issues and how we may work most effectively with you going forward.



Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daran Ponter".

**Daran Ponter**

Chair  
Greater Wellington

CC:

Leaders and Deputy Leaders of Government Coalition Partners, Wellington Constituency Members of Parliament, Wellington Region Mayors: Wellington Region Chairs, Mana Whenua Iwi, Wellington Region, Local Government New Zealand