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The Commissioners
 New Zealand Local Government Commission
 P.O. Box 5362
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On 8th May 2018, I made a written submission to the Representation Review of the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council (MWRC). I am not satisfied that Council has given my submission any consideration and consequently I will be appealing the MWRC decision, of 30th May 2018, to take no corrective action to address the numerous representation failures within the region.

My submission consisted of two parts; 1/ The serious malapportionment of most of the MWRC constituencies. 2/ The lack of appropriate representation for the communities of Levin and Feilding. Here I would like to elaborate on some of the points in my submission.

1/ a/ The most fundamental principle of democracy is that all electors have one vote of **equal** value. This is not the case within the MWRC. Compared to an average constituency comprising 20025 electors, those in the Ruapehu constituency effectively have 1.55 votes per person and those in the Tararua constituency effectively have 1.12 votes per person. Conversely, the electors of the Wanganui and Palmerston North constituencies only get 0.89 and 0.91 of a vote, respectively.

b/ The plus/minus 10% fair representation rule is not onerous when compared to NZ general electorates which must not deviate more than 5%.

c/ Modern communications and transport will largely eliminate the effective representation difficulties of constituencies with a large land area. Local body constituencies in other regions of NZ, and in Australia, are much larger than anything in the MWRC.

d/ A combination of boundary changes and increasing the number of councillors to at least 14, is all that is required to address malapportionment that is now among the very worst examples in NZ.

e/ In my submission I noted that the Palmerston North constituency was very close to the plus 10% requirement and would fail very soon based on known population growth. MWRC's response to this is the astonishing comment that "Council is not required to consider future population trends" Why indeed do we bother electing a council if their intention is to avoid planning for the future?

f/ It would be reasonable to expect that, almost thirty years after reform of local government and four representation reviews, all of MWRC's constituencies would comply with the plus/minus 10% fair representation rule. But it would appear that the effective representation of some constituencies is considered to be more important than the fair representation of **all constituencies**. In this regard, MWRC is prioritising the representation of property over the representation of people.

g/ Another fundamental principle of democracy is that of good communication between elected representatives and their constituents. Having discarded the fair representation minimum population level per councillor, as defined by the LEA 2001, MWRC is establishing a new minimum level for predominantly rural constituencies. The people of the region have not been advised what this new population level is, it could be 12,899 or it could be 1, we have no idea. Similarly, MWRC is establishing a new maximum population per councillor for predominantly urban constituencies, which could be 22,501 or it could be 1 million. Once again, the exact figure has not been revealed to the people of the region.

2/ a/ No current MWRC councillors come from Levin or Feilding and no councillors are listed on the MWRC website as taking responsibility for issues involving either town. There are no MWRC offices or service centres in Levin or Feilding and while Council produces dedicated e-newsletters for some community groups, Levin and Feilding are not included.

b/ MWRC describes Levin and Feilding as "secondary" and this appears to be the justification for the towns failing to qualify as "Communities of Interest" and yet both towns could easily qualify as constituencies based on population. Feilding would require minor boundary adjustment to achieve a population of 18000 and this would be an opportunity to rectify the current, non-compliant mess of the Manawatu-Rangitikei and Horowhenua-Kairanga boundary.

c/ MWRC's preferred interpretation of the "fair and effective" principles of the LEA 2001 has resulted in considerable injustice. For example, the Ruapehu constituency of 12,900 people is effectively represented but the 20,000 people of Levin have no effective voice at Council.

d/ The ratepayers, residents and businesses of Levin and Feilding are entitled to effective representation for their communities of interest and not to be subsumed within hybridised constituencies. Electing a councillor from each town is the best way to achieve this.

In conclusion, I would make the following observations;

The Ruapehu, Tararua, Wanganui and Palmerston North constituencies all suffer from levels of malapportionment ranging from significant to severe. The Horowhenua-Kairanga and Manawatu-Rangitikei constituencies both contain large urban communities of interest which are not effectively represented.

It is an extraordinary coincidence that all six of the current MWRC constituencies show representation failures that disadvantage the people and businesses that are from the towns and cities of the region.

The urban populations of Palmerston North, Wanganui, Levin and Feilding constitute 70% of the total population of the region. Why then are those cities and towns not fairly represented around the Council table ?

I thank The Commissioners for their consideration of the matters raised and look forward to their decisions to achieve a more democratic future for our local government representation.



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20th July 2018

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