

30 September 2009

Amalgamation

The Mayor of Hastings kicked the ball off by using amalgamation as the political platform for the 2010 local body elections. The chamber of Commerce jumped immediately on the bandwagon advocating the same result, but with a “let’s do it quicker” cry. These efforts and others will galvanise our communities to focus on agendas of amalgamation and inevitably as happened in 1998, service to ratepayers and focus on a real vision for Hawke’s Bay goes out the door.

All this in response to what?

The Government has expressly stated that towns, cities, and regions can work their governance themselves, with no pressure from Wellington. Currently the government is intent on sorting Auckland out. It does need sorting – decades of putting off decisions on major infrastructure has meant access and network problems for our biggest city in both population and economic drivers. This is not sustainable, bad for the city and bad for New Zealand. Hawke’s Bay is not Auckland – we do not need to be fixed.

Our transport throughout the region is excellent. When the Southern Arterial to Pakipaki, the Matahaura Gorge upgrade and the four-laning and roundabout at Hyderabad Road are completed, heavy traffic from the whole region will have a route to the port, seamless and away from residential areas.

Our economic drivers are still based on the land with enough diversification to keep the region buffered in times of downturn as we are experiencing. Our weather and attitude is superb; people live here because of a lifestyle which means we can live where we want, work in either city and have easy access to the outdoor environment.

Cooperation between the region and the two cities of Napier and Hastings has never been better. Many services are delivered jointly and appropriate decision making is often made together.

So what is it that drives people to cite amalgamation as the answer to dreams? No one has put forward a valid reason. And so I ask again:

- what do you want the region to look like in the future?
- what identity do you want your city to have?

Good governance is not about answering the question - amalgamation – yes or no? Good governance means responding to your communities needs, having the vision to add value to people’s lives today and tomorrow and it’s about building pleasant and sustainable environments. Discussion about our future is always good and I welcome that. I also welcome feedback from Napier citizens on what you want to see in your city now and for the future.

Barbara Arnott,
MAYOR

