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Newsletter of the **Whanganui Rural Community Board** – December 2021

Board advocacy for rural vaccine rollouts and education

Whanganui Rural Community Board members are speaking out in support of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Whanganui's rural areas. Board members would like to see more support for local initiatives and vaccine education in rural schools.

The rate of vaccination in Whanganui's rural areas is currently lagging behind the rest of New Zealand. Board chair Peter Oskam says the problem of low vaccination rates is best resolved by working closely with rural communities. "Local people best understand local needs. I believe we need to respect the choices people make, support the hesitant and trust the communities involved to know what needs to be done and how to do it.

"We'd like to support the Whanganui District Health Board in its efforts to reach rural communities in any way we can – we'd also like to see local initiatives adequately resourced."

Deputy board chair David Wells commends the Whanganui DHB for its huge effort to reach people in rural areas. "Because my wife is a vaccinator, I know it's been hard going for DHB staff, particularly as we're down to the last 10 percent of our unvaccinated eligible population.

"I feel we need to support those who feel nervous about the vaccine, and so extra effort needs to go into finding those who are unsure and anxious. I'd also like to see the DHB going into the region's schools – if children are given the correct information, I believe that they will share this with their families."

For available mobile COVID-19 vaccination information in Whanganui's rural areas, please go to: bit.ly/3llutmZ



Whanganui District Health Board's Waka Hauora (Health Bus) is part of the rural COVID-19 vaccination rollout in the Whanganui district IMAGE SUPPLIED

Upcoming digital survey will help establish baseline rural connectivity

As Whanganui's rural communities are well aware, fit-for-purpose internet and mobile phone coverage outside the urban area is far from ideal. Whanganui District Council will be conducting a digital survey from mid-January 2022 to get a baseline on connectivity and digital confidence. The survey will be held online, by paper and phone and be open to the entire district. This survey is important to rural communities as it will help identify areas where we may be able to work together to advocate for greater rural digital connectivity. Deputy chair David Wells is the Whanganui Rural Community Board's "digital champion" – please contact David if you have any questions or would like to help distribute the survey.

YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

The Whanganui Rural Community Board is elected by the district's rural community to represent and advocate for local rural issues.



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