

## Want to talk about rural issues?

Wanganui Rural Community Board represents the interests of our rural sector within the community and at the Wanganui District Council table. The Board members invite you to contact them to discuss matters affecting the rural community.

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## Talking rural broadband

Frustrated at the lack of *any* broadband capacity at Kakatahi, David (Tex) Matthews took matters into his own hands and set about working out how he could get connected. Tex worked with James Watts from Inspire and between them they have connected many a backblock already. Tex's no-nonsense, solutions focused approach, coupled with James's innovative, solutions focused approach, meant that towers started popping up all over rural Wanganui. Tex explains the process they've been working through:

When talking rural broadband in the Wanganui area, there is only one name: INSPIRE.

Rural broadband options have moved along from June 8 last year when we were told by Telecom at a meeting in Palmerston North that the following schools in our area were deemed out of scope: Aberfeldy, Kakatahi, Mangamahu, Ngamatea, Orautoha, Papanui Junction, Whanganui Awa, Upokongaro and Ngamatapouri. At present only Whanganui Awa and Ngamatapouri remain to be hooked up by Inspire, and planning for Ngamatapouri is already under way.



Had the funding been approved before the last election, the job could have been done much sooner. But after the election and then Christmas it was not until March 15 that funding for the project was officially approved. So there have been many repeaters built and schools hooked up. But there are still a lot of other people that could hook onto these existing repeaters. At the last count about two weeks ago, there were 150 people to hook up. On Friday, June 22, I met two blokes from Inspire on the top of the Aberfeldy hill and we found

another 15 houses from there to Kainui Road on Fields Track that could be hooked up to existing repeaters.

Currently on the Parapara there is a repeater across the river from Upokongaro, serving Upokongaro and Kaiwhaiki. Another repeater on Robert Horrocks' property serves some of the Makirikiri and the Parapara from the River Road turnoff to the bottom of the Aberfeldy hill. The repeater on Polson's property serves from the top of the Aberfeldy hill to Otoko Pa and there is only one property that cannot connect. The repeater on my place can get to every property from the Kakatahi school to Papahaua Station and the properties on Parapara side of Fields Track.

I have now sacked Telecom and disconnected the wires coming into the house and my telephone works on Voice over Internet Protocol. It costs \$17.50 per month. There was a one-off cost of \$40 to Port my phone number.

Currently Inspire has over 120 community repeaters serving more than 1000 customers. There are still more than 30 community groups wanting access.

# Structure of the Rural Community Board

*Alan Taylor, Chair*

Currently, the basis of elected membership to the Wanganui Rural Community Board is three subdivisions. These are Kai Iwi (three representatives), Kaitoke (two representatives), and Whanganui (two representatives).

Every six years a review of representation is carried out within councils. Our Board was restructured in 2007 and we are required to revisit its status.

While government guidelines for representation are exceeded with the Whanganui Subdivision having a lower than suggested ratio of population/representative, the geographically expansive nature of this subdivision warrants this exception and the Board finds that it works well. It is notable that the Board's overall representation is 770 residents/elected member and the Council's is around 3350 residents/elected member; also a reflection of the relative areas covered and the opportunity to focus on relevant issues. We think that we have got it about right.

The present Board, and Wanganui District Council, support a continuation of the status quo for both Board and Council representation. The Council has sought public submissions and the outcome of those is currently awaited.

## Road name change a safety issue

*Andy Collins*

The long process of changing a road name is under way for residents of the Upper Whangaehu Valley.

Confusion has arisen at times with the Whangaehu Valley road being located 40 kilometres from the Whangaehu village on State Highway 3. Residents have petitioned Council through the Wanganui Rural Community Board to extend Mangamahu road, which runs from the Wyle's bridge turn-off to Mangamahu village, on up the valley past Mount View Station to the Koukoupo stream bridge at the bottom of the Burma Hill.

The rest of the road, which continues over the Burma Hill to the Fields Track intersection, will be known as the Burma Hill road. This is because this section of road is accessed more easily from the south via the Parapara highway.

It has also been suggested that the Fields Track road name from State Highway 4 at Kakatahi be extended on past the intersection at Colliers bridge to Karioi. A problem arises here as the road crosses the boundary into the Ruapehu district and residents are meeting this month to decide an outcome.

The renaming of roads will aid in clarifying locations of rural properties in the same way that rural numbering of properties has successfully done in the past. From the emergency services to the plumber and the Plunket nurse, this is essential and may even some day save a life.

## Youth Driving Initiative

*Bill Ashworth*

The Rural Community Board is co-ordinating with the Wanganui Youth Committee to seek funding for an initiative to promote defensive driving and gaining a part of their Full Licence.

## Rural security – join a neighbourhood support group

*David Johnston*

Farmers and other rural residents need to be aware that crime is still being committed in their patch, with livestock and ATVs being major targets.

There needs to be more observation of strange vehicles.

Areas that have neighborhood support groups have less crime. Where cameras are installed, there is even less crime. More neighborhood support groups are needed. If you are interested in forming a group in your area contact: Wanganui Area Neighborhood Support Groups Inc. Phone: 06 3480568.

## Fordell drainage and footpaths

*Bill Ashworth*

The Rural Community Board is considering options for drainage and footpaths in the Fordell village. A meeting is proposed in the near future to discuss priorities and funding for these projects.

## Clear streams and drains on your property

Property owners are reminded to ensure that streams and drains on private property are well maintained and kept clear of debris.

With winter rains, there is potential for flooding if streams and drains become blocked. We encourage owners to help each other by ensuring that streams and drains don't overflow and flood their own or neighbouring properties. Regular maintenance of these areas will help to prevent flooding problems.

## ANZAC services in the rural area

*Alan Taylor, Chair*

When we wrote our Board's Ten Year Plan, *Rural Directions 2020*, one of our focus areas was to promote community well-being.

I had struggled with this somewhat woolly concept, not being sure how to measure it, or even know if a rural community with distinct values and aspirations is surviving with the so many disparate interests we have. Standing at Maxwell's ANZAC service, however, provided me with the opportunity to recognise that I was among the loftiest expression of community spirit and care possible.

The past few years have witnessed increasing numbers of rural folk attending our rural ANZAC commemorations.



Kai Iwi schoolchildren at the Maxwell service (photo: Paul Brooks)

This newsletter provides an opportunity to say thank you to those that organise and manage the services: District Council staff, Mayor Annette Main and councillors, armed forces and their cadets, RSA, clergy, musicians, traffic management personnel, Ross Jones at Brunswick, and at Maxwell, Richard White and his tractor. But my greatest gratitude goes to the children of Kai Iwi School choir who sang so beautifully for the servicepeople we were there to remember. The enthusiastic involvement of Wanganui's rural youth on this day epitomises the resilience of rural community values across the nation.

My wish would be to see the addition of the Australian national anthem at the rural services to acknowledge more fully the brotherhood of ANZAC.

If you have not attended a rural ANZAC commemoration, Wanganui District hosts them at Maxwell and Brunswick. They are outstanding, moving events, held in stunning surrounding beauty.

## Are you ready to ShakeOut?

Exercise ShakeOut is the national earthquake drill to be held at 9.26am on September 26. Participants at home, work and school will practice "Drop, Cover and Hold" - the right action to take in an earthquake.

### Indoors

If you are inside a building when an earthquake hits, move no more than a few steps, then Drop, Cover and Hold:

DROP to the ground (before the earthquake drops you!)

Take COVER by getting under a sturdy desk or table, and

HOLD ON to it until the shaking stops.

Stay indoors till the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit. In most buildings in New Zealand you are safer if you stay where you are until the shaking stops.

### Outdoors

If you are outdoors when the shaking starts, you should find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, streetlights and power lines, then Drop, Cover and Hold. Stay there until the shaking stops.

### Driving

If you are driving, pull over to a clear location, stop and stay there with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops. Once the shaking stops, proceed with caution and avoid bridges or ramps that might have been damaged.

New Zealand ShakeOut provides a great opportunity for organisations and businesses to examine and review their own emergency preparedness arrangements. Families and households can create, review and practice their household plans.

You can register to participate in Exercise ShakeOut at [www.shakeout.govt.nz](http://www.shakeout.govt.nz). The aim is to have one million participants throughout New Zealand.

# How we're representing rural interests

## Horizons Regional Council Draft 10-Year Plan

**Mark Lourie**

The Wanganui Rural Community Board recently made a submission to Horizons Regional Council's Draft 10-Year Plan.

A common theme in our submission was around the lack of transparency, consultation and discussion. Is this problem from a lack of consultation from Horizons or reluctance from grassroots level to be involved?

Our genuine lack of understanding on some issues is compounded by the information being provided at a very high level and which didn't set out where in the region the work was to take place or how the work was chosen or prioritised. Our submission made it clear that we would like to be better informed and have a greater part to play in issues relevant to our region and community.

With regards to pest control and TB, we believe the benefits are for everyone in our region when it comes to possum control, and suggested the cost of control should be across the board. We requested the good work continue and a smooth transition in areas exited by the Animal Health Board be taken up by Horizons' programme.

With regard to dumping of slip material into waterways, we confirmed we understood the principles behind this, but believed certain circumstances required this option to be available without resource consent. These included the volume of material, the distance to a suitable dumping site and the impact on the road and its users. We requested figures to confirm it was having an impact on the waterways.

The lower Whanganui River flood protection plan once again lacked consultation with the rural community. Stages 2 and 3, though not within the rural area, are of economic importance to the rural community. We requested involvement in decisions and would like to see funding for flood protection earlier than year six in the plan.

The Board supported the investigation into innovative ways to provide transport services to the rural areas and requested to be involved in the planning and implementation of this initiative.

## Regional Women's Health Service Proposal

**Darrell Monk**

The recent decision by the Whanganui District Health Board to reject the Women's Health Service Proposal, that would have seen over half of the women in the district birthing at Palmerston North hospital, was a decision welcomed by the Wanganui community. In particular the rural residents of Wanganui would have been severely affected by this proposal. Rural communities are by their nature distant from most health services and the size of the Wanganui district already determines significant travel time for many of its rural residents, to extend this with further travel to Palmerston North was deemed by the Wanganui Rural Community Board to be unacceptable.

The Rural Community Board presented a submission to the Whanganui District Health Board and asked that they reject the proposal. The Rural Community Board stressed to the Health Board that the rural sector is a significant contributor to the Wanganui economy, providing primary produce that supports major Wanganui industry and ancillary services. This sector is striving to keep young families engaged in the rural economy and access to key services is critical to engaging young families. The rural sector relies on a strong urban centre that provides the necessary services to support rural production and this includes the provision of excellent health services. The Wanganui Rural Community Board believes the proposal goes against these requirements.

The Regional Women's Health Proposal would have been yet another reduction to rural health services. Rural communities have already faced uncertainty and reduction in the level of health services - the recent issues with the Otaihape Health Centre and the pending closure of the McMahan Health Centre at Waiouru Army Camp to name a few.

The Wanganui Rural Community Board applauds the District Health Board decision and together with the Wanganui District Council will support the recruitment and retention of specialist staff to enable a full and comprehensive maternity service in Wanganui.