

Urgent Reports Agenda

**Notice is hereby given of
an Ordinary Council Meeting**

Tuesday 21 July 2026

10:15 am

**Council Chamber
Waimate District Council
125 Queen Street
Waimate**

www.waimatedc.govt.nz

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16.8 Government's Simplifying Local Government Head Start Pathway - Council's
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REPORTS

16 GENERAL REPORTS

16.8 GOVERNMENT'S SIMPLIFYING LOCAL GOVERNMENT HEAD START PATHWAY - COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC POSITION

Author: Stuart Duncan, Chief Executive

Authoriser: Stuart Duncan, Chief Executive

Attachments: 1. Potential Merger Maps [!\[\]\(e474458956c9a37fbf9586ddb60a7fa1_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(4d1d3f2547aeece54bb6babd23f4121b_img.jpg\)](#)
2. SLG Amalgamation Feedback - Redacted [!\[\]\(ec45aa71601db5755c5e2662ad427708_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(8f6ad92394b094baf6a51f98af6c5abc_img.jpg\)](#)

PURPOSE

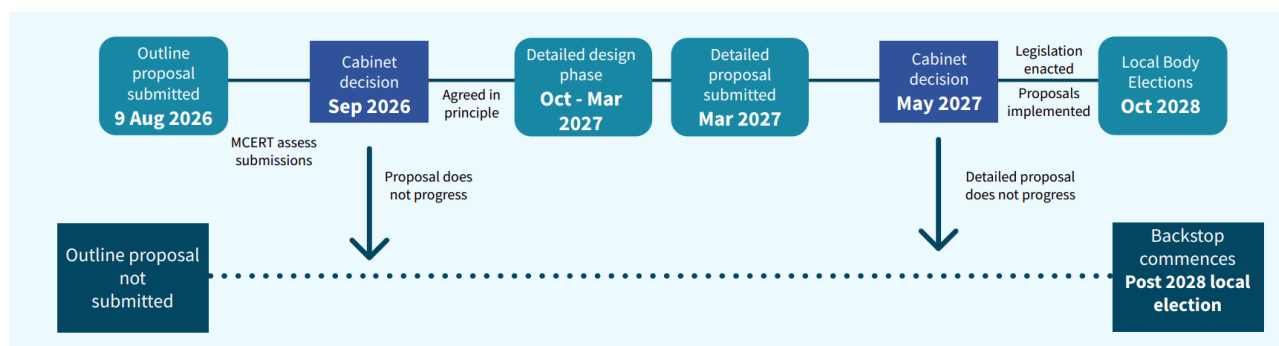
1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council confirmation of its strategic position regarding the Government's Head Start local government reorganisation process. Specifically, the report seeks Council endorsement to continue working collaboratively with Mackenzie, Waitaki and Timaru District Councils to explore the potential establishment of a new unitary authority, while recognising that discussions remain preliminary and no commitment has been made to any final structure or proposal.
2. The report also seeks to preserve the opportunity for Ashburton District Council to participate should it choose to do so, acknowledging the potential benefits of considering a broader South Canterbury solution and the importance of maintaining flexibility as neighbouring councils determine their preferred level of involvement in the process.
3. The report seeks agreement on a process that enables Council to decide on a preferred option for submission to central government, while acknowledging that engagement undertaken to date will not meet the thresholds typically expected for decisions of this scale.
4. Due to the lack of detailed direction, the absence of any confirmed funding arrangements, and the limited information available regarding implementation, governance, service delivery, and the Government's proposed Backstop process, there remains substantial uncertainty within the Head Start framework.
5. As a result, any decision at this stage will require Council to exercise a high degree of judgement, balancing incomplete information against the need to position Waimate District to influence potential future outcomes. Council must therefore make decisions based on strategic considerations, known risks, emerging opportunities, and what it believes is in the long-term best interests of the district, while recognising that additional information may emerge as the process develops.

BACKGROUND

6. Central government has indicated that local governance structures and functions are to be reformed with an objective to reduce complexity and increase efficiencies. Through its Simplifying Local Government process, regional and territorial authorities will be reconstituted as unitary authorities. This will occur either via the Head Start pathway or Backstop process.
7. Through the Head Start pathway, central government is seeking councils to voluntarily elect to move early and create geographically larger unitary authorities covering existing territorial activities as well as all, or possibly some, regional ones.
8. The Head Start pathway is a voluntary early option for councils to take, where outline proposals are required to be submitted by 9 August 2026. If supported by Cabinet, these plans would move into a more detailed design and consultation phase, leading toward implementation at a governance level for the 2028 local elections.
9. Central government has stated that councils that do not enter the Head Start pathway (or become part of a successful Head Start outline proposal, whether supported by them or not)

will enter the Backstop process after the 2028 local elections. Cabinet has yet to make policy decisions about the exact design of the Backstop process, however, officers currently understand that this would result in reform decisions being taken at a more centralised level and with communities having less agency than the Head Start pathway.

10. The Government Head Start guidance document outlines how councils are required to show how the new unitary authority can deliver improved outcomes on the following criteria:
 - a. **Supports the new planning system:** how will your proposal make the new planning system easier to deliver and operate – not harder - and how you will ensure continuity throughout the process through the arrangements you are putting in place?
 - b. **Simplifies local governance:** does your proposal simplify things? Will it reduce duplication and make decision-making clearer and more efficient? Does it reduce complexity and make the system easier to understand and run?
 - c. **Economies of scale:** does your proposal support regional strategic planning, including spatial planning, land transport, public transport and economic development? Will it deliver better value? How does it improve efficiency, save money over time, and support better asset management, infrastructure and services?
 - d. **Maintains local voice:** how will communities continue to be represented and heard, and how local voice will be maintained in a larger system?
 - e. **Deliverability:** how this can be implemented? Is it realistic and able to be delivered on time?
11. Central government's stated timeframe for any successful outline proposal under the Head Start pathway is outlined below.



12. A regional workshop involving councils across South Canterbury and North Otago identified a range of opportunities and challenges associated with the Government's Head Start programme. While Waimate District Council's long-held view is that the district is well served by its current governance arrangements and would be best left to continue operating independently, the reality is that the Head Start pathway and proposed Government Backstop process mean that local government restructuring can no longer be viewed as purely voluntary.
13. In that context, Council considers it essential to actively engage in discussions to ensure Waimate's interests, local voice, service expectations, and rural priorities are represented and protected. The workshop highlighted the importance of understanding both the potential impacts of reorganisation and any opportunities that may arise from greater regional alignment, while recognising that Waimate's participation is driven by the need to influence outcomes rather than support for amalgamation as an objective in itself.
14. At the time of writing this report, Waitaki District Council had met and unanimously resolved to work with its northern neighbours to investigate a joint Head Start proposal involving Waitaki, Waimate, Mackenzie and Timaru District Councils. This decision is a significant development, as it creates the opportunity for the entire Waitaki River catchment to be considered within a single potential unitary authority. From a natural resource management and planning perspective, having the catchment contained within one governance structure offers potential benefits through more integrated decision-making, improved coordination of

water, environmental and land-use issues, and a greater ability to manage the catchment as a single interconnected system rather than across multiple local authority boundaries.

15. Preliminary work on a variety of regional options has also been underway at the Canterbury Mayoral Forum level, the work of which has provided further information for the proposal presented today.
16. The combined Mid-South Canterbury and North Otago area represents a region of approximately 125,000 people and assets in excess of \$5.7 billion. This scale suggests that a range of structural options may be viable, including more integrated or consolidated governance arrangements.
17. Detailed metrics of each council to aid decision-making are provided below. References to a combined region include the whole current area of Ashburton, Mackenzie, Timaru, Waimate and Waitaki District Councils. The following information has been sourced from the Local Government Funding Agency.

Operating Results

Operating Results FY2025	Waimate	Timaru	MacKenzie	Waitaki	Ashburton
Rates	\$15,982	\$84,258	\$18,423	\$46,722	\$54,372
Total Operating Revenue	\$25,860	\$135,833	\$31,259	\$90,764	\$107,751
Depreciation	\$6,953	\$38,229	\$8,315	\$23,458	\$23,198
Total Operating Expenditure	\$24,426	\$141,508	\$36,146	\$93,864	\$99,419
Asset Sales	\$28	\$113	\$22	\$1,359	\$2,399
Capital Expenditure	\$8,290	\$45,525	\$7,716	\$44,324	\$34,158

Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet FY2025	Waimate	Timaru	MacKenzie	Waitaki	Ashburton
Total Assets	\$572,262	\$2,105,118	\$423,232	\$1,376,412	\$1,251,902
Current Loans	\$7,489	\$250,790	\$23,811	\$73,471	\$143,600
Net Worth	\$572,262	\$1,811,561	\$393,461	\$1,290,166	\$1,091,063

Debt

Debt Items FY2025	Waimate	Timaru	MacKenzie	Waitaki	Ashburton
Gross Debt	\$7,489	\$250,790	\$23,811	\$73,471	\$143,600
Asset Portfolio	\$4,344	\$68,981	\$2,257	\$23,118	\$18,901
Net Debt	\$2,932	\$174,382	\$20,964	\$47,970	\$120,984

Other

Other FY2025	Waimate	Timaru	MacKenzie	Waitaki	Ashburton
Population	8,450	49,500	5,520	24,600	37,400
Rating Units	4,394	22,771	5,539	14,032	16,367
Land Value	\$3,802	\$9,523	\$3,598	\$6,246	\$13,747
Capital Value	\$5,935	\$18,923	\$6,388	\$11,945	\$20,712

Rates per person

Council	2023	2024	2025	Rank*
Ashburton District Council	1,240	1,310	1,454	60
Mackenzie District Council	2,777	2,971	3,338	2
Timaru District Council	1,334	1,474	1,702	41
Waimate District Council	1,581	1,679	1,891	28
Waitaki District Council	1,590	1,692	1,899	26

* Rank is out of 67 territorial and unitary councils (but not regional councils) with 67 being the lowest rates per person/rating unit and 1 being the highest for the 2024/2025 financial year

Rates per rating unit

Council	2023	2024	2025	Rank*
Ashburton District Council	2,803	3,010	3,322	51
Mackenzie District Council	2,719	2,959	3,326	50
Timaru District Council	2,821	3,219	3,700	33
Waimate District Council	2,953	3,222	3,637	36
Waitaki District Council	2,752	2,949	3,330	49

* Rank is out of 67 territorial and unitary councils (but not regional councils) with 67 being the lowest rates per person/rating unit and 1 being the highest for the 2024/2025 financial year

18. From Waimate District Council's perspective, four options were considered (refer to maps in attachment 1). The most logical starting point for investigating a potential unitary authority is the existing South Canterbury / North Otago grouping of Waimate, Mackenzie, Timaru and Waitaki District Councils. These councils already share many economic, social, infrastructure and environmental connections, including the opportunity to manage the Waitaki River catchment within a single governance structure. Collectively, this grouping would represent a population of approximately 88,000 people and more than 46,700 rating units, providing a significantly larger scale than any of the individual councils while still maintaining a strong rural / regional identity.
19. While the inclusion of Waitaki strengthens the scale, strategic relevance and geographic coherence of any proposal, there also remains an opportunity for Ashburton District Council to participate should it determine that a South Canterbury solution aligns with its long-term interests. The addition of Ashburton would further increase the population base to approximately 125,000 people and create a unitary authority of a scale comparable to, or larger than, several existing regional governance arrangements in New Zealand. Such a configuration may provide greater opportunities for organisational capability, strategic planning, economic development, and the efficient delivery of regional and territorial functions, while still requiring careful consideration of local representation, community identity, and service accessibility.
20. Regardless of the final configuration, Council's primary objective remains ensuring that any future arrangement delivers tangible benefits for the Waimate District, protects local voice, and provides a governance and service delivery model that is sustainable, affordable, and responsive to the needs of rural communities.
21. A final consideration is that the compressed 90-day Head Start timeframe leaves little practical opportunity for councils to undertake comprehensive public consultation before identifying potential partners and developing a high-level proposal. At this stage, the process is primarily about determining which councils are willing to work together to investigate a possible future structure, rather than deciding whether a new unitary authority should ultimately proceed.
22. It is also important to recognise that selecting potential partners is not a popularity contest based on individual council financial performance, debt levels, rates, or other isolated metrics. Any future unitary authority must ultimately function as a coherent geographic, economic, environmental, and community entity.
23. Factors such as natural catchment boundaries, transport and economic linkages, shared communities of interest, and the practical delivery of regional and territorial services are likely to be far more important considerations. From Waimate District Council's perspective, communities do not have the luxury of choosing partners based solely on preference; rather, councils must work within the realities of geography, existing relationships, and the Government's reform framework to identify arrangements that are both practical and in the long-term interests of their communities.

The Backstop Provision

24. A key consideration for Council is the Government's proposed Backstop process, which will apply to councils that do not participate in, or are unsuccessful in progressing, a Head Start proposal by the Government's prescribed timeframe (*compulsory reform post the 2028 elections*). While the Government has provided limited detail regarding how the Backstop will operate, its existence signals a clear intention that local government reorganisation will proceed regardless of whether individual councils choose to participate in the initial Head Start phase.
25. For this reason, while participation in the Head Start programme may be described as voluntary, the broader reform agenda cannot be considered voluntary in terms of the potential for future amalgamation or structural change. Councils therefore face a strategic choice: actively engage in shaping potential future arrangements and advocating for their communities, or risk having aspects of those arrangements determined through a government-led process with less opportunity for local influence.
26. The real strategic question is whether it is preferable to actively participate in shaping both the reform process and the future governance arrangements of any potential unitary authority, or to wait for a compulsory process where not only the final outcome, but also the governance model, representation arrangements, and implementation framework, remain largely unknown and may be determined with significantly less local influence.
27. Council held a workshop on 16 June 2026 and agreed a key reason for Waimate District Council remaining actively engaged in the Head Start process is to ensure the district has a meaningful seat at the table when the governance arrangements of any future unitary authority are being designed.
28. Council has identified a number of guiding principles that it considers fundamental to protecting the long-term interests of the district, including maintaining strong local representation with genuine decision-making authority, preserving local service levels and a physical Council presence in Waimate, protecting ratepayers from sudden financial impacts, securing transition funding, safeguarding staff, ensuring meaningful iwi and community participation, and allowing the Council's newly established Water Services Business Unit the opportunity to demonstrate its success.
29. Participation in the process provides the best opportunity to influence these outcomes and ensure that the governance framework of any future organisation reflects the needs and expectations of Waimate communities, rather than having those arrangements determined without local input.

PROPOSAL

30. That Council formally agree to continue working with Waitaki, Timaru and Mackenzie District Councils to further investigate and develop a potential Head Start proposal. This work would focus on understanding the benefits, costs, governance arrangements, service delivery implications, and representation models that may arise from any future unitary authority, while recognising that no final commitment is being made to any group proposal structure at this stage.
31. At the same time, Council should preserve the opportunity for Ashburton District Council to join the process should it determine that a South Canterbury solution aligns with its long-term interests. Retaining flexibility at this stage allows the participating councils to explore the most practical and beneficial regional configuration without prematurely excluding options that may offer greater scale, capability and strategic alignment.
32. As part of the development of any detailed Transition Action Plan, it is proposed that an agreed off-ramp mechanism be included to provide participating councils with a clearly defined process for reassessing their involvement should material issues arise during the investigation and due diligence phases. Such a provision would recognise that councils must retain the ability to act in the best interests of their communities if significant risks, unforeseen costs, or fundamental governance concerns emerge. However, it is also

recognised that once councils have collectively agreed to progress a Head Start proposal, the threshold for any individual council to withdraw should be high. Withdrawal from an agreed proposal would have significant implications for the remaining councils, potentially undermining the viability of the proposal, impacting project timelines, increasing costs, and requiring substantial redevelopment of the proposed governance, representation, financial, and service delivery arrangements. Accordingly, any off-ramp provisions should be carefully defined, transparent, and limited to circumstances where withdrawal can be clearly justified.

33. The intent of proceeding is not to endorse amalgamation as an outcome, but rather to ensure that Waimate District Council is actively engaged in shaping any potential future arrangements and is in the strongest possible position to advocate for its key principles, including maintaining local representation, preserving community identity, protecting service levels, and ensuring affordability for ratepayers.

Options

34. Confirm Waimate District Council's intention to lodge an outline proposal under the Head Start pathway and undertake community engagement to inform its decision-making.
35. Decline to lodge an outline proposal under the Head Start pathway and opt to enter the Backstop process.

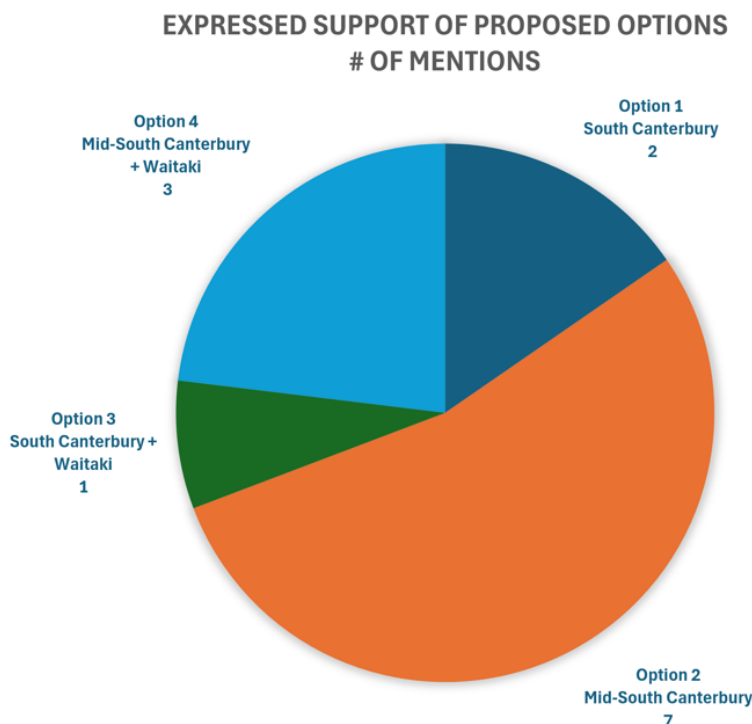
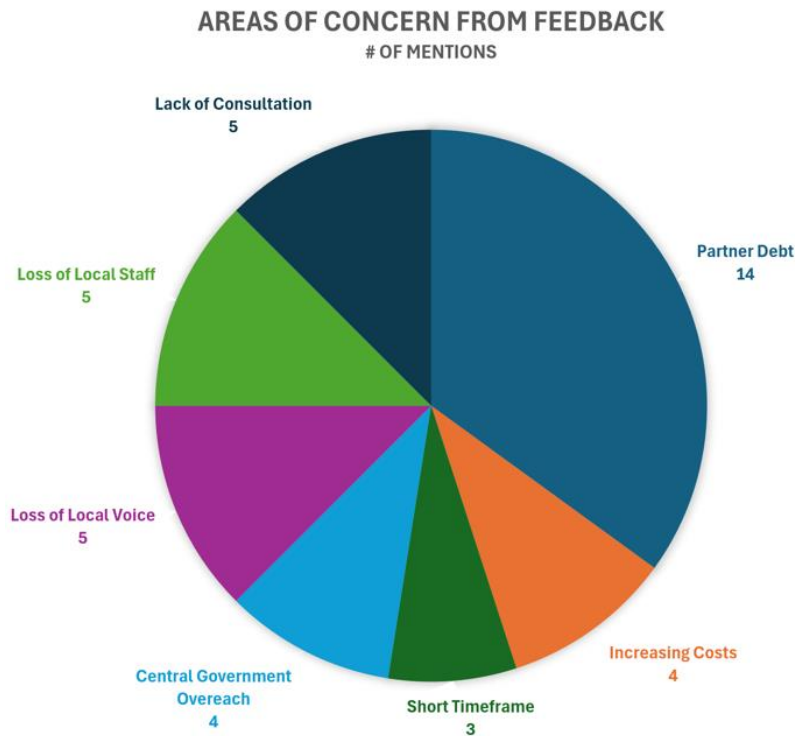
ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

36. This issue is of high significance under Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, as it will likely result in fundamental reform in the nature, scale and function of local government.
37. Impacts will include changes to representation and governance structures, service delivery arrangements and long-term financial sustainability.
38. Consultation in line with Councils Significance and Engagement Policy has been constrained by the central government timeline. Council sought feedback via a public meeting and has kept the community fully informed as the process has developed, including outlines of meetings at the Canterbury Mayoral Forum and with neighbouring Councils.
39. It is noted that any successful outline proposal involving Waimate District Council will enter a detailed design phase, where central government has indicated that additional public consultation will occur. It is at this point that Council will enter a full consultation process with the community to determine key principles for the partnering councils as they work towards a unitary council.

Public Feedback

40. Council received an update from central government on 5 May 2026 via the Simplifying Local Government initiative, informing councils of a new Head Start pathway process for amalgamations.
41. Council organised a public meeting on 14 May 2026 and posted information on the Council website page regarding the Head Start pathway process.
42. Council designed eight information posts on their Facebook page regarding this subject which were viewed on average by 5,000 viewers, resulting in 91 comments. These comments have been included in attachment 2 along with comments received via Facebook direct message and Council email.
43. In reviewing the information, responses varied considerably in relevance, depth and clarity of sentiment, and many could not be classified as supporting or opposing a particular position.
44. The feedback summarised below has been drawn primarily from comments on Council's relevant Facebook posts but also includes emails and direct messages received over the timeline of the Head Start pathway process. The information provided should be interpreted with caution. The information is not intended to provide statistical representative findings or definitive conclusions, but only a high-level indication of community sentiment regarding the local government reforms and proposed amalgamation options.

45. Three key themes emerged from the feedback; the most frequently raised concern related to the levels of debt held by potential amalgamation partners. This was followed by concerns regarding the potential loss of local representation and local Council staff. A further recurring theme was frustration over the lack of time given to councils to undertake the proposed reforms.



LEGISLATION

46. Local Government Act 2002 (particularly ss 76–81)
47. Government reform framework

FINANCIAL

48. At this stage, the financial implications of any potential amalgamation or reorganisation proposal cannot be accurately quantified. While it is widely accepted that there would be significant costs associated with developing and implementing any future unitary authority, including planning, transition, systems integration, organisational restructuring, and governance changes, the scale and funding of those costs remain unknown. A clearer understanding of the financial impacts will only emerge if a Head Start proposal is successfully developed, accepted by the Government, and progresses to a more detailed assessment and public consultation phase. Until then, any discussion regarding costs, savings, efficiencies, rates impact, or funding arrangements remains largely speculative.

Budget

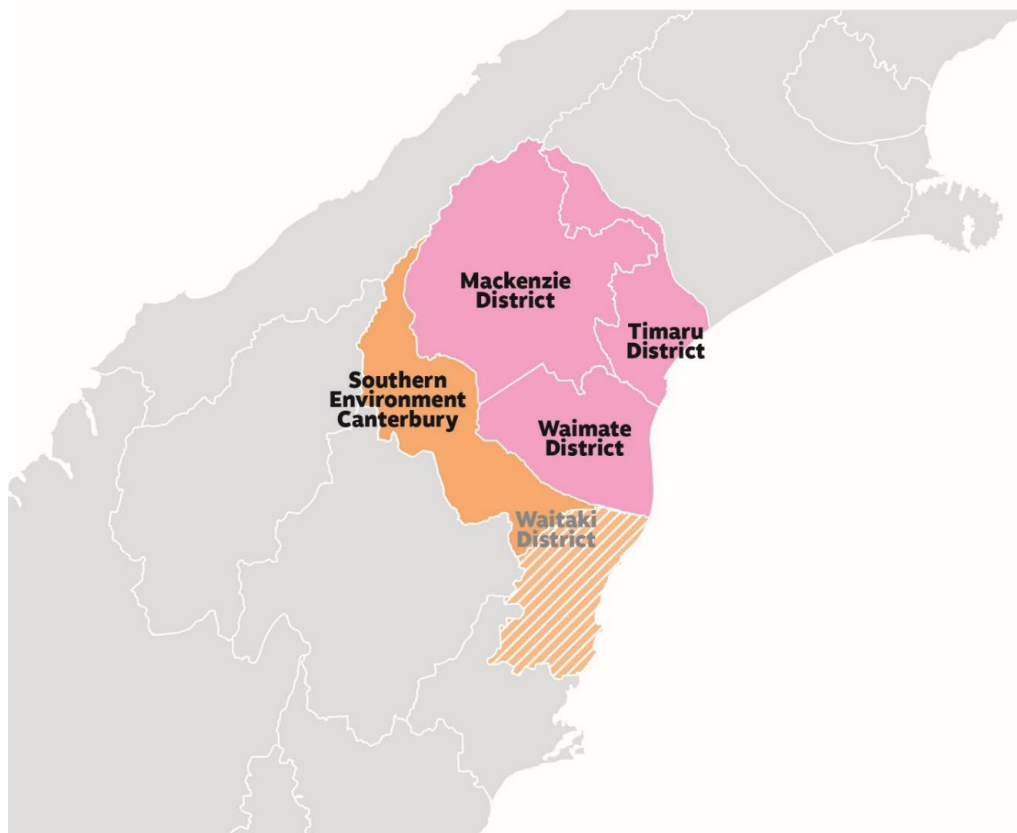
49. There has been no budgetary provision made for responding to the Government's proposal, nor has any financial support been made available by Government to assist councils in their response.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Government's Simplifying Local Government Head Start Pathway - Council's Strategic Position report is accepted; and
2. That Council confirms its commitment to work with Timaru, Mackenzie and Waitaki District Councils to explore the potential establishment of a new unitary authority, and preserves the opportunity for Ashburton District Council to join the process should it determine that a South Canterbury solution aligns with its long-term interests, and lodges an outline proposal under the Government's Head Start pathway; or
3. Council declines to lodge an outline proposal under the Government's Head Start pathway and defaults to the Backstop process.

Option 1**SOUTH
CANTERBURY****UNITARY AUTHORITY**

All councils in the South Canterbury region (Timaru, Waimate, Mackenzie)
+ Southern Environment Canterbury (Waitaki River catchment)
+ Environment Canterbury functions



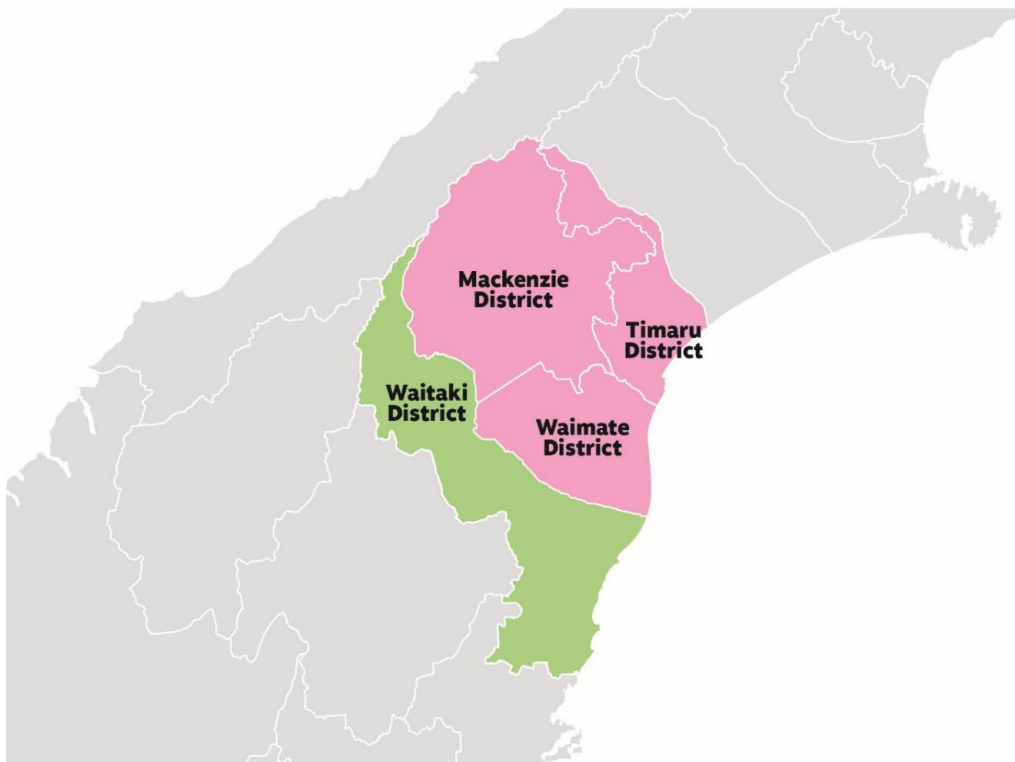
Option 2**MID-SOUTH
CANTERBURY****UNITARY AUTHORITY**

All councils in the South Canterbury region (Timaru, Waimate, Mackenzie)
+ Ashburton District Council
+ Southern Environment Canterbury (Waitaki River catchment)
+ Environment Canterbury functions



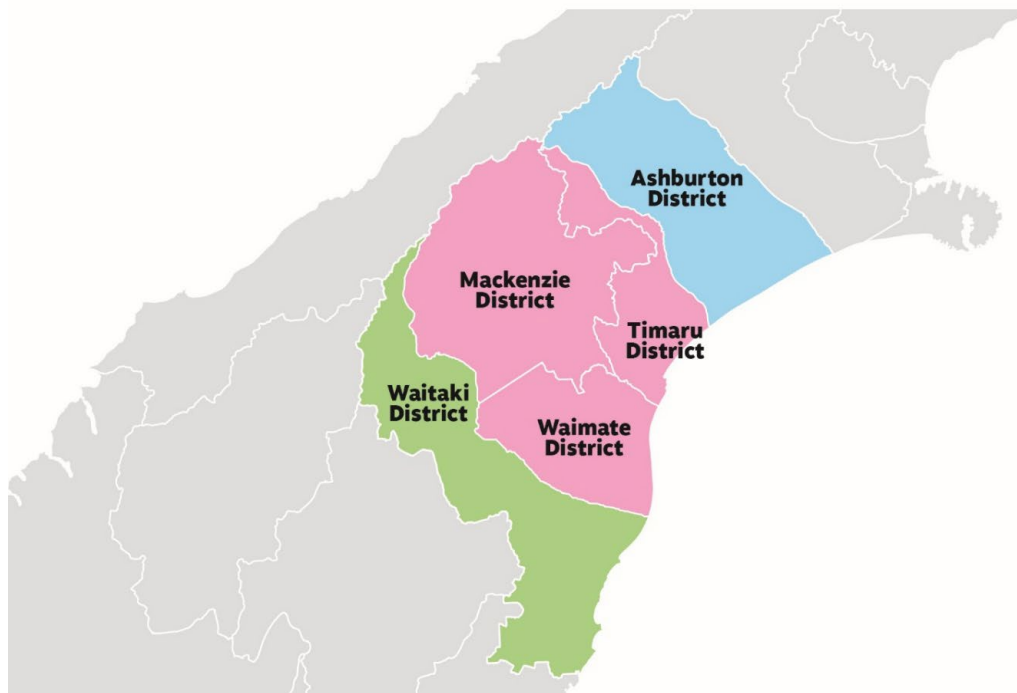
Option 3**SOUTH CANTERBURY
& NORTH OTAGO****UNITARY AUTHORITY**

All councils in the South Canterbury region (Timaru, Waimate, Mackenzie)
+ Waitaki District Council
+ Environment Canterbury and Otago Regional Council functions



Option 4**MID-SOUTH CANTERBURY
& NORTH OTAGO****UNITARY AUTHORITY**

All councils in the South Canterbury region (Timaru, Waimate, Mackenzie)
+ Ashburton and Waitaki District Councils
+ Environment Canterbury and Otago Regional Council functions



Feedback #	Feedback Content
Note: Feedback numbers are for Council tracking purposes and are assigned to feedback in the order they are processed. For this reason, feedback numbers may not appear in sequential order. Note: Feedback that would not already be publicly available, such as those received via direct message or Council email, have had identifying information removed in line with Council's Privacy Policy.	
Comments received under Council Facebook post 6 May 2026 (Mayor's Statement and Meeting Announcement)	
#1	Callum Wouters Just got the big tick for your 3 Waters etc, and nic minute, you should amalgamate with neighboring councils who may have HUGE debts... three months is not a lot of time but I guess the general election is looming...
#2	Messy Nessy Minister for Local Government says he is "giving Councils the steering wheel" https://www.facebook.com/share/r/188WJ63ey2/
#3	Wayne Reid A public meeting. Will this be live streamed? .
#4	Bryce Caird Where is the mandate for govt to make such a massive change to our TLA's?? It seems to me that as a country we are being forced into making changes that very few of the country actually support. 9w Like Reply Hide 9   Messy Nessy Bryce Caird that question is better directed to Simon Watts, Minister for Local Government - S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz
#5	Rosalind Murray-Kendall Is there an agenda? Do we get to see it before the meeting? Thanks for the invitation to attend. 🌞
#6	Jocelyn McIlraith I support Fed Farmers concept of moving to separate unitary councils eg metropolitan and provincial as towns and cities do not have the same priorities or understanding of rural communities. Such a shame councils moved from original county councils .
#7	 Author Waimate District Council If you can't attend the meeting, you can join online via a link on Council's website on the day. 9w Like Reply  Wayne Reid Thank you.
#8	Wayne Reid It appears WDC is refusing to answer questions posed here. Par for course...

Comments received under Council Facebook post 11 May 2026 (Meeting Announcement)	
#9	Tracy Johnson If you are unable to attend both in person or online- is there another way of gaining info on the meeting or sharing your views? Cheers 9w Like Reply Hide  Author Waimate District Council Tracy Johnson : For anyone unable to attend the meeting, Council will provide an update after the meeting on Facebook, our website and our newsletter, Newslane.
#10	Jocelyn McIlraith Please ensure there are the same meetings also in rural areas - like Hakataramea or Cattle Creek. This decision is not just about Waimate town 8w Like Reply Hide  Janice Cleave Hillside Jocelyn McIlraith if you can not attend do the live stream, saves money with travel for councillors and ratepayers
#11	Warren Foote https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/594289/government-gives-councils-amalgamation-ultimatum 8w Like Reply Hide Warren Foote https://www.1news.co.nz/2026/05/09/smaller-councils-fear-forced-mergers-under-govt-reform-push/ 8w Like Reply Hide Warren Foote https://www.waimatedc.govt.nz/council/local-government-reforms/simplifying-local-government
Comments received under Council Facebook post 18 May 2026 (Post-Meeting Update)	
#12	Dave Barltrop Take note W.D.C. how a successful operation engages with it's constituents.
#13	Kurt Scriven Well we can't expect that kind of council , ratepayers conversation in Waitaki that would not be allowed at all as historically proven . Taverndale and the Parmley led circus will tell us once they've decided . And when it all goes to custard it will be the ratepayers fault and I guess they are correct we elected the idiots .
#14	Linda Thomson Waimate is looking good to move too.
#15	Merv Wilson Bloody great to see a council that cares about the people. Great work, Waimate.

#16	Paul Foley Good to see. (I was born in Waimate)
#17	George Minty Great PR from the council.
#18	Susan Elizabeth Fergusson Real people
Comments received under Council Facebook post 19 May 2026 (First Steps)	
#19	Kathy Ryan When watching the meeting online I was expecting there to be a vote/show of hands re the proposed amalgamation and perhaps an offer of one for online viewers as well. I was very disappointed that there wasn't. Yet you say you have overwhelming public support to go ahead and make overtures to our neighboring councils? 7w Like Reply Hide  Phillipa Anderson Kathy Ryan well if you were at the meeting, and listening. This is a government directive. We must amalgamate, so the decision is which council? 7w Like Reply Hide 1   Kathy Ryan Phillipa Anderson I was listening online. Does that not count as being at the meeting considering those numbers were collated as well? Yes, I'm well aware this is a government "directive ". I'm also aware there is an election in just 6 months. Why the haste? Why the "you must, or else"? I'm not opposed to amalgamation, as such, if it is done in a well-planned and well-thought out manner AND if it benefits all parties involved. I am opposed to being pushed into something in a hasty manner which may end up being regretted for years to come. 7w Like Reply Hide 1   Raneef Franklin As far as I am aware the govt has said "They must discuss amalgamation" now that could mean have a chat but it does not mean "comply with amalgamation" Also Council Debt... what happens with that? Are we Ratepayers expected to cover that too ? That could mean our rates demands increase for someone elses bad financial management... Take a look at the inflated salaries across these councils. Why do office boffins need ratepayer funded vehicles? They do not! There are other things too that are "frilly wants" not needs installed across NZ at Ratepayers' expense that we never use ..Can WE afford all this? Our household cannot! I say tread VERY carefully with this.

#20	Gemma McCallum Bringing timari and waimate together is going to be awful. Timaru will just absorb waimate and we will get the scraps. Timaru will be just the big monster for everyone else to feed. 7w Like Reply Hide  Jimmy Courtney Gemma McCallum This is the same feeling we have in Waitaki. A lot of talk Waitaki going North, but as the Waitaki Hydro is in the Waitaki Basin & South Canterbury is in Waitaki Electroate, how about Canterbury coming south, makes sense
#21	Pamela Manning Called tick the box mtg.
#22	Rex King Not waitaki
#23	Rosalind Murray-Kendall I can't see that we bring anything to the table. Just what have we got? We'll become the minority goslings to whoever we get lumped with, no matter what.
Comments received under Council Facebook post 9 June 2026 (FAQs)	
#24	Amanda Hansen And what about our people who work for the council? The parks and reserves team, the water boys the smaller overlooked people who work for the WDC will their jobs be safe if amalgamation happens? 4w Like Reply Hide 1   Nicholas Anthony Jacob Blades Amanda Hansen I truly think the workers will be fine, I think it will be the managers that will suffer as one manager can cover more areas than 2 but staff doing the hands on work can only do what they are doing and can't be spread too thin as they are doing an amazing job for all their represented areas. If you have a HR team or a financial team they can cover more areas. However the hands on teams who do an awesome job of looking after the town can't be split. 4w Like Reply Hide Edited  Nathan Barnes Amanda Hansen they should be safe as there will be a larger area to service. The only ones who could or should lose their jobs are middle to senior managers.
#25	Jimmy Courtney At a loss why you insist Waitaki is going North?. We aren't in Canterbury, we are bloody Otago, go have a fkn look at our Topography. The region isn't interested in going north, so let that sink in!!! 4w Like Reply Hide  Paul Thompson Jimmy Courtney Haven't you claimed Richie and he lived in the Waimate district up the Haka Jimmy Courtney so what's your point

#26	Martin Russell 
#27	Andrea-Kay Spears This is about making "supercities" - all it will do is succeed in causing more costs to the community and smaller towns will lose their individuality. Rates will increase beyond anything imagined and Services will become so stretched that they will forever be playing 'catchup,' and the smaller villages on the outskirts will get 'forgotten' about because they'll be just outside the boundaries; they'll end up as ghost towns. It happened in the North - Auckland is in the terrible state it's in because it was forced to become a 'super city' - the only thing 'super' is the amount of crime, filth, destruction, poverty and ignorance. This won't be beneficial and it will be expensive. Rates will climb so high that people will no longer be able to afford to own a house; that includes landlords. So where will people live? In houses owned by rich councillors?
Comments received under Council Facebook post 18 June 2026 (Four Options and Guiding Principles)	
#28	Amanda Hansen Of the limited information the public have been given, based on the population, rates costs and outstanding debt held by current individual councils, I believe option 2 would be the best option for waimate. But that is just my opinion. I'm more worried about our people here who work for the council, when you say protect employment conditions for a minimum agreed period, what does that mean exactly?
#29	Cedric Coll From the outside looking in I think Option 2 (South Canterbury / Ashburton Districts would be the best marriage long term) That is between the Rakaia and Waitaki rivers basically.
#30	Derek Drummond If only we lived in a democracy where crap like this did not happen

#31	Jason Hawker Option 2 or 4 3w Like Reply Hide 1 Jimmy Courtney Jason Hawker 4 puts you in Otago
#32	Jim Truck This is undemocratic, why would waimate ratepayers want to pay for timaru s second museum even timaru ratepayers dont want too, why does TDC get to the boss ? Their should be a government review into council s spending, reduce costs , lastest survey of retirees, main concern, Rates , we owe to our retirees to make affordable for them , come politicians its election year , Nats do you want NZ first to get your vote ?
#33	Messy Nussy I think another public meeting is required where we might have a robust discussion of your suggested guiding principles. A few immediate questions.... Isn't one of the main benefits of amalgamation to deliver efficiencies by removing duplication of effort, systems, and resources? If every council maintains and protects staff, where will the savings come from? How long do you intend to protect staff? How many executives do we want to pay for? And for how long? Is it your intention for Waimate Ratepayers to accept rates increases to cover the debts of others, but impose those extra costs gradually so we might not notice? Iwi are part of the "community" are they not? Is your guiding principle at odds with the requirements of central government that unaccountable, unelected representatives do not decide how ratepayer money is spent? Is it appropriate for council to advance co-governance without consultation? 3w Like Reply Hide 12 Liz Moir Messy Nussy I've asked the same as to 5 ceos 5 mayors how many councilors around the table? What happens to community boards.. stone silence... I get the "we dint know" but they have to have ideas? 3w Like Reply Hide 3 Jimmy Courtney Messy Nussy When its held behind closed doors, be weary & engineered outcome is looming
#34	Ranee Franklin What iwi "partnerships" are you informing us , the Ratepayers your Employers of? What are these please? There would appear to be a serious conflict of interest there as under their iwi "rules" they must do the utmost to ensure iwi get more than anyone else" (I am paraphrasing here but you do know what I am alluding too I am sure) Robert Lee Councillor Davina Smolders

#35	Ranee Franklin None of the above. Declare the Waimate District a Republic! We do not need nor want any other councils debts. I am NOT paying more rates because of shonky fiscal practices by other irresponsible councillors , CEO & iwi
#36	Shane Woodley Don't feed the monkeys.
#37	Brad Johnston Just stay away from Waitaki don't think it's been run very well. 3w Like Reply Hide 5👍 Melissa Mac Correct it is a walking disaster of woketards and people looking to further their own agenda not the districts. Most seem inept and unable to understand basic PnL and balance sheets. It's been horrific watching the demise of the district at their hands. Totally clueless.
#38	Lisa Sullivan What if the community doesnt want ammalgamation 3w Like Reply Hide 3👍🤔 Paul Fraser Lisa Sullivan read the article if you don't do it yourself the government are going to put you where they want so it's in your interest to sort it yourselves Do it your way or have it done by the coalition of clowns your choice 3w Like Reply Hide Lisa Sullivan Paul Fraser I know that. But what if the majority are against. Do we always just do as we are told? 3w Like Reply Hide Ranee Franklin Paul Fraser So this is like the "hobsons choice" covid injections.. Take the shot or no Job. Take the shot or no return to your country of birth if overseas when the govt declared a "pandemic" "Nobody will be forced to have the injections but if you don't we will make your life difficult if not impossible until you comply" And now we have the govt stating "You choose who to amalgamate with or we will make the decision for you and do what we want" Hmmm do we live in a Democratic country or a Dictatorship? I would say the latter is the (sadly) correct answer. How much more will Kiwis take before full rebellion occurs!? 3w Like Reply Hide Messy Nussy Paul Fraser isn't it odd though, that no Council nor iwi, nor LGNZ have squeaked a single word of resistance? If all, or even most, of the Local Government entities said no, we'd be having a different conversation. It's eerily quiet out there.

#39	Ranee Franklin And how much money are these iwi "consultations" and meeting attendances costing the waimate ratepayers?
#40	Craig Meechin Option 3 or 4 no thanks
#41	Dave Boyle What ever you do say away from the financially illiterate Waitaki District Council , who spend like drunken sailors even now when their in a financial crisis if the Mayor is to be believed, their over staffed and now looking for a \$145,000 a year sports coordinator.
#42	Liz Robb Lisa Carter
Comments received under Council Facebook post 2 July 2026 (Update and Community Feedback)	
#43	Paul Fozzy Collins Thankyou. So from Waimate councils point of view what is preferred option and why please. 1w Like Reply Hide 5 Janette McKenzie Paul Fozzy Collins They don't state a preferred option at this point in time - they are still open to discussion. https://www.waimatedc.govt.nz/council/news-public-notice?id=2yk97fn4v1cxbyzay2dr 1w Like Reply Hide Messy Nussy Janette McKenzie but they always highlight their preferred option on consultation documents. 1w Like Reply Hide Janette McKenzie Messy Nussy I must have missed that. So, what is their preferred option? 1w Like Reply Hide Messy Nussy Janette McKenzie I mean all the usual (previous) consultations indicate their preferred option..... LTP, Annual Plans, LWDW, LGFA. They will put forward their preferred option, but probably not until they design the consultation documents. 1w Like Reply Hide Janette McKenzie Messy Nussy I agree, that is usually the case. But, I think this particular consultation is 'out there' with all the councils. So many unknowns and such a short time frame.

#44	 Author Waimate District Council For the maps, go to https://www.waimatedc.govt.nz/.../Council%20Amalgamation... 6d Like Reply 1   Wayne Reid Remove Timaru from Option 3. Then it's managable. All rural.
#45	Amanda Hansen By logical process of deduction with the little information you have shared with the public, it would only make sense for the WDC to make clear what their preferred option is and why. Looking at your map and remembering the 15-20 year joint contract you signed with the Mackenzie and timaru district councils with envirowaste for our rubbish and recycling services, it would make sense that these 3 councils amalgamate. But again I ask what happens to our local people who are employed by the council? They should not lose their jobs.
#46	Jimmy Courtney Otago has no business in Canterbury politics sort ya own ammalgamation out & we will sort ours
#47	Kurt Scriven I wouldn't go with North Otago they are so far up a creek without a paddle they would only bring debt . 6d Like Reply Send message Hide 4    Cara Wilkinson Kurt Scriven check out TDCs debt level 🙄 6d Like Reply Send message Hide  Helen Craven Kurt Scriven I agree wholeheartedly

#48	Roseanne Sheridan Waitaki and South Canterbury share the Waitaki and Aoraki. I have lived in both. My grandfather was on the WDC for many years. I now live in Waitaki and we are fighting this rates rise, finding out what's been going on. You guys might find it helpful to have some people willing to stand up and fight for you, especially in being rural areas sharing the Waitaki River. Have been thinking of having us all as farmlands united to get rid of the big urban areas that grab all the funding. We are Waitaki, not simply the outskirts of Otago. Thinking, Central, Waitaki, Waimate, Timaru and Ashburton all together, away from the big cities. Our River and Our Mountain we share together, farmlands together. Think we all could get along well.
#49	Russell Wallace Whatever happens Waimate is screwed. We end up absorbing years of financial mismanagement from our two nearest neighbours with no credit given for our measly \$8m of debt. It's a Ponzi scheme to make us all poor
#50	Steve Slack Sign a parliamentary petition to extend the timeline on amalgamation https://petitions.parliament.nz/aebfb50f-f54f-44e0-a57d-08dec1ed3363?lang=en&fbclid=IwY2xjawSzmaTleHRuA2FlbQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzIxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeCgd4CNwq25A7tL-3he9RVqj4DmbrYRiJ30REAPC5B0MBegC_KI6GkkJuKC4_aem_z55clit5bcNdiuW16zqt0w
Comments received under Council Facebook post 13 July 2026 (Feedback Reminder)	
#51	Pam Skilleter My preference for amalgamation is item 1, Waimate, Mackenzie, Timaru.

#52	Messy Nussy Success or failure depends on the integrity of the process and the players, not the boundaries. The guiding principles, agreed in secret point to a lack of transparency, integrity and good faith. How will we find efficiencies and eliminate duplication if ALL Councils intend to protect ALL their staff? How can you aim to remain one of Waimates largest employers when the purpose of amalgamation is to move shared functions and systems 'upward'? If central government has outlawed voting rights to unelected representatives, why would you invite them to design the structure that they are not allowed to vote in? Your guiding principles serve a select few people and are not necessarily in the best interest of the district, or the wider region. If every council goes into negotiations with similar foundations there will be very few winners, and a great many losers, regardless of boundaries. Who suggested these guidelines?
#63	Wayne Reid - 1h Waimate. Waitaki. McKenzie. Compact. Similar values. Can still be referred to as local government. Voting restricted to elected people only.
Comments received through Council Facebook direct messages	
#53	Hi, is the link for online on your website? As I cannot see it. Regards [redacted] For tonight's meeting Hello [redacted] the link is now on the website 📍. It'll start at 7pm. 📍 Sent by Waimate Council 📍 May 14, 2026, 4:34 PM Thanks
#54	Can I suggest an amalgamation with MacKenzie and Waitaki, Timaru just sold family silver and have so many infrastructure issues, with debt incredibly high.
#55	My response to the suggestion regarding the amalgamation decision: Under no circumstances should we align with Waitaki, their debt doesn't need to be shared with us. Recommendation from myself is: Waimate - Timaru - Mackenzie plus possibly Ashburton. This would set a geographical boundary between Waitaki and Rakaia Rivers. Hope this is the way the outcome unfolds. Best regards, [redacted]
Comments received via Council email to follow	

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, July 2, 2026 7:04 PM
To: Comms
Subject: Amalgamation Consultation
Categories: Blue Category

Thank you for the invitation via the latest amalgamation update to provide feedback at this stage.

It is understandable that, with a number of options under consideration, it makes sense for Council to settle on a preferred option, provide a rationale for that choice, and then invite community response.

My concern at the moment is that one section of the community appears to be given greater input on this issue than all others.

In your update of 18 June, you advised seven Guiding Principles to be applied in working through this process. Principle 6 involved ensuring that "iwi and community are informed and engaged throughout the process". This suggests that a particular section of the Waimate community, to be identified on grounds of ancestry and ethnicity, is to be singled out and entitled to consideration different from everyone else in the community.

That conclusion is then reinforced by the provision for iwi to be "at the governance design table from day 1".

Concerns that arose recently at the Far North District Council have led to a Bill currently before the House aimed at restricting decision making in local government solely to the public's elected representatives. The practice of extending such authority to unelected appointees strikes at the very heart of our democracy.

So does the practice of granting a self-interested, race-based group access to the design stage of arrangements for the future governance of the Waimate region in whatever format that may involve.

If this process is corrupted at the outset by practice that can be described only as racist, then the likelihood of a fair, democratic and equitable outcome for all people in our community will have been compromised even before a preferred amalgamation choice has been made. I would have hoped for better from Waimate's elected representatives.

I attach below an article published recently in the NZCPR Newsletter for your information and guidance.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

By [Fiona Mackenzie](#)

Government Ministers Simon Watts and Chris Bishop have given councils just two more months to propose mergers or face imposed restructuring, which they say will simplify and strengthen “local voices”. But it would pay to be sceptical of their motivation. “Local voices” doesn’t mean local democracy.

Bigger Councils, Less Accountability

Auckland’s imposed amalgamation in 2010 should serve as a warning, not as a blueprint. It shows how such constructs can leave ratepayers funding their own political marginalisation at an ever-increasing rate.

The promise was stronger representation, lower costs, and greater efficiency. The reality in Auckland has been the opposite, with the Council becoming a sprawling and expensive bureaucracy where decision-making is remote, cumbersome, and increasingly dominated by unelected officials, interest groups, and tribal elites. Elected councillors often appear powerless, with agendas, information and options controlled by bureaucrats.

Ratepayers Fund a Parallel System

Aucklanders were never asked whether they agreed to fund a parallel governance system that incorporates a growing network of tribally focused structures and operations alongside — and within — the Council itself.

Ratepayers are obliged to accept ever-increasing rates, as well as separated out water, sewage, rubbish and food-recycling charges, plus a ridiculous amount of debt. The hikes are cited as necessary to retain ‘library hours, bus and ferry services, community grants and maintenance of sports fields and recreation facilities’.

Funding streams that appear never to be under threat, however, are those specifically designated for ‘Māori’. They bubble up here, there and everywhere, are not transparent, and so are exceedingly difficult for ratepayers to monitor and assess. Examples include:

- The Māori Outcomes Group, with ratepayers now funding \$171 million in capital and operational expenditure over a 10-year period. The Group’s 2023/24 report stated that this funding was to promote **“partnership and shared leadership”** and **“to ensure Māori voices continue shaping council decision-making”**.
- Annual grants to tribes (all 19 of them) have risen rapidly, from \$2.04 million in 2020/21 to \$8.14 million in 2024/25 — certainly more than the rate of inflation. This information was only revealed by a recent Official Information Act request which took 4½ months to be answered. The funding’s purpose? Once again: to support Māori participation in the Council’s decision-making processes.

- Then there's the all-powerful Independent Māori Statutory Board (IMSB), now rebranded Houkura. It was imposed as part of amalgamation to represent Māori interests in Auckland. What began as an advisory body now occupies offices in Viaduct Harbour, the most desirable part of town, and charges all expenses to ratepayers (\$3.5 million in 2025).

The IMSB/Houkura appoints unelected members with voting rights to Council committees. These include Policy and Planning, Revenue, Expenditure and Value, Transport, Infrastructure, Budgets, Audit and Risk, Performance and Appointments, CCO Oversight, Civil Defence, Regulation and Safety, Auckland Domain, Parks and the Community.

These committees are powerful, receiving and deciding on detailed information. Their recommendations go to the Governing Body of elected councillors (who don't have access to all the data), for what is in effect a tick-the-box exercise. For example, the Budget committee recommends rate increases (including the latest of an average 7.9% excluding the many service costs which are separately priced and invoiced).

- Ratepayers also fund race-based expenses in 'Council-Controlled' Organisations (CCOs), **both sides of co-governance entities**, race-based employees/entitlements, affirmative action for 'Māori businesses' and race-based art.

Some of these entities openly pursue "decolonisation" programmes. The co-governed Tūpuna Maunga Authority, for example, has pursued legal action against residents opposing the destruction of healthy exotic trees from volcanic cone reserves. Ratepayers end up funding the millions of dollars involved in both the tree destruction and native replanting, plus the legal defences. Meanwhile residents pay their legal bills in after-tax dollars.

- Across the wider council, race-based cultural programmes, 'partnership'-based initiatives and consultation processes have become standard practice, often with little transparency over their cost or value. There's pressure on staff and suppliers to participate in Māori greetings, prayers and cultural protocols regardless of personal belief. Some privately object but stay silent for fear of professional consequences.

Critics are told these race-based costs are "negligible" in the overall budget. Yet the many millions involved could help repair ageing infrastructure, meet the demands created by Auckland's rapid population and housing growth, reduce debt, or ease relentless cost increases, while keeping libraries open and sports fields maintained.

Reinterpreted History and Political Power

Ngāti Whātua is Auckland's most successful tribal invader and is reportedly the largest commercial landowner in the region since a 2011 Treaty Settlement — another Chris Finlayson special. Their

activities have extended beyond governance, funding streams and thought control (including the pervasive Rainbow Tick programme!) into documented history itself.

An example was the replacement of Auckland's waterfront plaque commemorating Governor Hobson's 1840 purchase of land for the founding of the city. The new plaque doesn't mention the Deed of Purchase, instead framing the land as a 'gift' from Ngāti Whātua. This will no doubt be useful for future land or coastal claims.

When challenged on the facts, Deputy Mayor Desley Simpson defended the plaque's reinterpretation, saying Council had relied on "*guidance from those with more skill in this area*" and that "*it is reasonable for the Council to use narratives that seek to capture the spirit of this interpretation of the 1840 deed*".

Democracy Outmanoeuvred

As councils grow larger, ordinary residents lose influence while entrenched institutional interests gain it. Wealthy tribes, bureaucracies, corporate partners, activist networks, and the legacy media operate continuously and strategically. Ratepayers vote on councillors once every three years, with little information to go on.

From the Far North down to Gore — before the RMA revisions are implemented and before the 2026 elections — councils are right now aggressively embedding unelected, unaccountable tribal power throughout their governance and operational systems, with cultural overlays affecting a lot of private land. Councils are also creating independent entities to entrench tribal controls over public resources, with the essence of all life — water — being top priority.

Any well-informed sceptic would conclude this is exactly how National wants it. The subtlety of a letter from Minister Watts' office to a constituent, dated 10th June 2026, tells all:

"How councils choose to involve iwi is a decision for them and they are accountable to their ratepayers for those decisions. National's position on co-governance hasn't changed. We support local decision-making, not co-governance being imposed on communities by central government."

Minister Watts did undertake to amend the Local Government Systems Improvement Bill so that unelected individuals will not enjoy voting rights or count towards a quorum at council committee meetings. This, however, is unlikely to be in force this side of the election so may well be too little, too late.

His press release also states that "*Statutory committees and appointments, including those agreed as part of a Treaty settlement, will be excluded and committee members appointed under Acts that are not covered by the Local Government Act 2002 will retain voting rights*".

Watts also claims that it's too difficult to close Auckland's racist loopholes — which affect 34% of New Zealand's population. This is despite Auckland Ratepayers' Alliance obtaining legal advice to the contrary.

So Auckland's Super City will be free to continue its 'Māori world view, race-based consults, committees, appointments, business procurements and funding — both in-house and in the CCOs

which have no direct responsibility to ratepayers, despite being responsible for water and sewage, transport, culture and events, and the future resilience fund.

A Warning for New Zealand

It is so disappointing that National-led governments have failed to deliver legislation that adequately protects democratic accountability. We can expect unelected individuals or groups to continue to ‘sit at the table’ to vote, influence or intimidate elected councillors, and win all sorts of race-based entitlements, including outright control.

Unlike in Auckland, ratepayers in smaller districts may still be close enough to see what is happening and heed the warning. They may be able to push back if they’re not already too intimidated.

And now is the time to make a lot of noise — before more race-based entities are created and before the November 2026 election. Under amalgamation, it all becomes far harder.

Remember that Auckland’s so-called Super City has delivered:

- More distant governance and weaker accountability.
- CCOs controlling resources (such as water) and infrastructure with appointed boards and deals with tribal interests.
- Higher costs, rising debt, and wasteful spending.
- Larger bureaucracies and less transparency.
- Legalised race-based ‘corruption’, expanded tribal influence and control, co-governance and co-management frameworks, decolonisation programmes, and race-based spending.

The inevitable conclusion is that amalgamation and the “local voices” slogan do not strengthen democracy. They concentrate power away from ratepayers while rewarding inefficiency, incompetence, and greed.

References:

- [The IMSB Annual report 2024/25.](#)
- [auckland-council-group-maori-outcomes-report-2023-2024.pdf](#)

- Auckland Ratepayers Alliance <https://www.ratepayers.nz/news>
- A letter from Minister Watts' office to a constituent, dated 10th June 2026

Acknowledgement:

Research by [Democracy Action](#) was referenced in the preparation of this article.

Submission to Waimate District Council re the proposed Headstart Amalgamation

I believe Waitaki, Waimate, Mackenzie, Timaru should amalgamate.

- This new Council to be called Aoraki.
- The Kakanui mountains form a natural southern barrier and watershed.
- I would suggest that the bottom end of Waitaki county would be better joining with Dunedin. Palmerston is south of the Kakanui range and therefore should be included in any Dunedin proposal. Dunedin is also the local people's 'community of interest'.
- If the people in the Hampden and Moeraki (and maybe further north) area wish to be part of Dunedin, then perhaps a boundary could be created north of Hampden that runs from the sea to the mountains along say Mile Flat Road or similar.
- However, I must emphasise that it is for the locals to make that decision.
- To the North I would exclude the Ashburton County as it has close ties to Selwyn and Waimakariri Counties further north.
- The Rangitata River North Catchment is a comparatively small area of Ashburton and may be an area of co-operation between the eventual two local authorities.
- It would be in Ashburton's best interests to amalgamate with Selwyn and perhaps the rural part of Waimakariri and let Urban Christchurch be its own council.
- The urban areas of Selwyn and Waimakariri surrounding Christchurch could join with Christchurch
- These are just my thoughts, and it is important for local people to make local decisions.

Perhaps it is time for all the old provincial boundaries to be put aside, and decisions be made on the future rather than the past.

- In the past unbridged rivers were the natural boundaries. However today it is the mountain ranges which are the natural boundary, as transport links through them are much more difficult.
- Also, mountain ranges stop the creation of ‘communities of interest’ much more than now bridged rivers.
- One of the most important aspects of amalgamation is to keep communities of interest and that means keeping Rural and Urban areas in separate councils.
- I see both Timaru and Oamaru as rural based urban areas whose livelihood is very intertwined with their rural areas.
- Christchurch is its own economy and culture. I would very much oppose any scheme that included Christchurch.
- Ecan’s running of Canterbury as a whole suffered badly from the sheer numbers of urban representation drowning out the Rural Voice. The issues faced by the communities are quite different and need to be handled differently.

I live in Maungati, but our community of interest is Timaru rather than Waimate and therefore is our main centre. Also, I am a ratepayer in Timaru. I therefore have an interest in both communities.

I have also submitted this proposal to Timaru District Council

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 1:53 PM
To: Comms
Subject: Amalgamation

Happy to go with South Canterbury and include Ashburton. The rivers make a natural boundary around us.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Sent from my Galaxy

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 1:32 PM
To: Comms
Subject: Amalgamation feedback
Categories: Blue Category

Firstly, thank you to Stuart Duncan for his work as CEO. Your work with Mayor Craig and the Councils have put us in a good position for Amalgamation negotiation.

AMALGAMATION CHOICES

While it may seem friendly to think “small is best”, with the level of debt Timaru and Waitaki have, and the challenges of Mackenzie’s infrastructure with a small population to pay, I think spreading these loads over the maximum number of people would be wise. So I’m very keen to include Mid-Canterbury. (I imagine Selwyn will go north to Christchurch, but I’d even include them – on the grounds of population.)

I’m also in favour of including the Waitaki and Rakaia Rivers; having the Waitaki as a boundary has made things tricky in the past – which means probably, I’m also in favour of including Waitaki if they want to come north.

The challenge for you, our Council, is to negotiate excellent local representation and service for our district, and to not make us worse off.

WATER

The one area that Waimate needs to sort is the quality of the water in the schemes. That is why I didn’t vote to keep Waimate water in-house. Interesting to note new research directly linking premature birth to areas with high nitrate levels.

Food for thought. Time to stand up for water resources as part of our heritage and community health and wellbeing, not a resource for profit.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2026 8:15 PM
To: Comms
Subject: Preferred option

Categories: Blue Category

Hi,

In my opinion I think option 1 (south canterbury) would be the best choice for amalgamation.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

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**BIG REFORMS
DECISIONS**

PAGE 6

Consultation Form

3. Which option do you prefer?

Please rank ALL the options from 1 for most preferred to 5 for least preferred.

- 1** **OPTION A**
A South Canterbury Unitary Council based on either territorial or river catchment boundaries
- 2** **OPTION B**
A Mid-South Canterbury Unitary Council based on either territorial or river catchment boundaries
- 5** **OPTION C**
A Mid-South Canterbury & North Otago Unitary Council based on either territorial or river catchment boundaries
- 5.1** **OPTION D**
Do not submit a Head Start proposal and enter the backstop process
- 5.2** **OPTION E**
Other – please specify below (use additional paper if required)

NO TO ANYTHING TO DO WITH NORTH OTAGO

WE MOVED HERE IN FEB 2025 FROM
MAHENO BECAUSE OF OUR DISGUST WITH
THE WAITAKI DC AT THE TIME ESPECIALLY
THE CEO - OVER PAID, OVER STAFFED,
DON'T LISTEN, 2019 NO DEBT
DEBT IN 2025 CLOSE TO 100 MILLION



4. Do you think that the resulting unitary council should include the river catchments at the edge of its territory? (See note on pg 2)

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Unsure

5. Do you have any other comments?

KEEP AWAY FROM THE WAITAKI DC
YOU WILL REGRET TRYING TO WORK
WITH THEM - NO TRUST - NO CONFIDENCE,
AND NEVER DO WHAT THEY SAY THEY WILL.
POOR MAYOR CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITH
HER TEAM.

1. Which council district do you live in?

- ☐ Mackenzie District ☐ Other (please specify below)
- ☐ Timaru District ☐ **WAIMATE**

2. What matters most to you in any future local government structure?

By sharing how important each of these principles are to you, you'll be helping us make sure the views and preferences of our residents and communities are considered as we develop our proposal further in the coming months.

Select up to five:

- 1** Affordable rates ☐ Healthy environment
- 2** Quality services and infrastructure ☐ Urban growth is properly planned
- 3** Keeping decisions local **4** Services are easy to access
- ☐ More efficiency, less duplication ☐ Local character is protected
- ☐ Rural areas and small towns are valued **5** More transparency
- ☐ Economic Development
- ☐ Other (Please specify below)

Privacy statement

All submissions are public information and will be included on Council's website and/or in public documents located at Council offices and Libraries/Service Centres. This will not include your contact details.

Any submissions presented in the form of a petition or with multiple signatures will be processed as a single submission.

Please contact us via submission@timdc.govt.nz or feedback@mackenzie.govt.nz if you have any questions, before making your submission.

This information is being collated by Timaru District Council and Mackenzie District Council.



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2026 11:45 AM
To: Comms
Subject: Amalgamation

Hi

I am fully in favour of Option 3.

The Waitaki Valley through to the back of the Mackenzie basin is a natural basin. There must be duplication along the Waitaki River from camping to other areas roading etc. Bridges.

MDC supported Waitaki DC after the Ohau fires by providing building and officers. If joint not so many staff would have had to be in Twizel.

Not as sure about the southern end of Waitaki.

Shame the Waitaki i site closed this year due to funding issues but didn't agree with it being moved to a back street of the Oamaru Precinct either.

Mildly ok with option 4. I would have thought Ashburton joining northern councils would be more beneficial for them. But also get they are a more similar mix to South Canterbury or Rural Canterbury.

Kind Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2026 1:04 PM
To: Comms
Subject: Amalgamation

Option 2 But-

We are very reluctant to make any choices without facts from the government on how the debt of some Councils will work for all ratepayers and neighbouring Councils being forced to join, because of the lack of detail I suspect they will just push through what they have decided!
The whole process is flawed and lacking in any fairness for a Council that have done a good job for Ratepayers. We have been Ratepayers in the Waimate District for over 30years and always thought we were rather lucky with the sensible approach of our Council and wanted to Thank the Council.

When National send the next email wanting my vote and a Donation I will have great pleasure in my return email!

Regards
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2026 1:24 PM
To: Comms
Subject: Amalgamation

Hi,
I note the info on your website about amalgamation.

I favour Option 4: South Canterbury, Ashburton and Waitaki Districts. This grouping would create a strong rural and central South Island local government entity. It combines communities of interest with similar challenges and goals, and provides the population and rating base to help fund the big issues including water, roading, climate change preparedness and social needs.

Regards,
[REDACTED]



16th July 2026

Re. Council Amalgamation Submission

The Waimate District Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the council amalgamation. I am sure you are all acting in our best interests under duress. We are so excited with the opportunity to break down some barriers of geography, barriers of thinking, barriers of tradition in order to make the most of opportunities that we dwell amongst.

We would like to share our thoughts and are genuinely interested in the outcome of this proposal. We love this region, and we have chosen to make it our home, operated a reasonably sized business here for 40 years, and are now moving towards retirement in the area.

You have not included the option of Waimate joining just with Mackenzie and Waitaki Councils so we would appreciate you considering the points we wish to make.

To me Waimate District has three main assets which are, the people, the natural beauty of our coastal agricultural flats, rolling hills and mountainous areas, and thirdly the Waitaki River. If we look at the other councils we are looking at potentially merging with only Waitaki and MacKenzie Councils have the Waitaki River within their boundaries. For this reason I feel that these two councils should be where our merger proposal starts. The Waitaki provides around 20 - 25% of the hydro production to New Zealand.

Significant. It is a large recreational and sporting playground for the populace from Christchurch to Dunedin. It supports significant areas of irrigation for agriculture and horticulture. It is the source of pure clean water which is a real commodity of the future. Finally Mount Cook, the hydro lakes and the river and tributaries are a tourist attraction both domestically and internationally. This brings a direct return to Waimate District, its people, its businesses and the council. To us the amalgamation with MacKenzie and Waitaki Councils would only enhance this, as a real benefit with a coordinated approach. All three councils have similar issues. Being spread out communities, lots of rural roading and bridges, water schemes and lower population areas. Again, amalgamation must bring efficiencies and better delivery to the people and ratepayers.

Waimate needs more visitors coming through our region, spending their discretionary dollar and enjoying what we have to offer. I think that a Waitaki / MacKenzie / Waimate amalgamation would only enhance the possibilities. I know you will say that the total population of this amalgamation, 38,300 will not satisfy the overall objective. We are

disappointed that population might be the only criteria to get any option of amalgamation over the mark. We don't live in Wellington, Auckland, or Christchurch. They have their urban problems, not our problems. Our problem is our size, collectively 17,801 square kilometres for the above population to fund. As I say the three councils have the same problems, assets and benefits and so Waimate's representation would not be lost through amalgamation with them.

I know everybody thinks Timaru Council is where we should start. Common sense you would think. Timaru District is dominated by the city. City problems, city benefits and city thinking. The only benefit to Waimate is the Port and the associated industries it supports. We believe that all other benefits and essential services for Waimate could be satisfied by the amalgamation with Mackenzie and Waitaki. Timaru as a district has way overspent on municipal and city issues for no benefit to rural people and ratepayers. To me they are living beyond their means with debts of over \$5000 per head of population compared to under \$1000 in Waimate District.

Do we really need, want or deserve this debt? As Waimate people you might tell me this will be ring fenced. Ever heard of creative accounting? We don't believe the ring fencing is sustainable or realistic in the long term.

I suggest that we let Ashburton civilise Timaru, putting all their energy into policies and procedures for an unknown outcome. Waimate District will be better represented by amalgamation with councils with similar issues, strengths and weaknesses, Waitaki and MacKenzie.

Waitaki and MacKenzie must be in with us, we say.

If you are determined to go with Timaru, then option 4 is the only way. We don't think that this is the best way forward for the Waimate people or district. Just too big and spread out. From Rakaia River to Shag Point. I think we would lose what is Waimate.

Thank you for this opportunity.

From

