



Date: 20 April 2025

To: Porirua City Council:
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From Porirua Harbour Trust and the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet
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Submission on the Annual Plan 2025/26

Please note this submission is confined to the “Local Water Done Well” part of the consultation and is made on behalf of the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchments Community Trust and the Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet.

We wish to be heard on this submission

The purpose of the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchments Community Trust (Porirua Harbour Trust) (PHACCT)

The Porirua Harbour Trust (PHACCT) exists to promote the sustainable management of the Porirua Harbour and its catchments by advocating for the sustainable management of the harbour's ecosystem and its catchments and fostering understanding of ecological and environmental issues associated with the harbour and its catchments through education and community awareness

The purpose of Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet (GOPI) is:

Consistent with its ecological values, encouraging, protecting, fostering the natural, historic and cultural values of the Pāuatahanui Inlet.

PHACCT and GOPI are also members of Te Hononga, the Wellington Water Catchments Collective, with whom we are aligned in terms of aims, objectives and approach

Our position on the “local water done well” options:

PHACCT & GOPI support the Porirua City Council's preferred option for a multi-council owned new water organisation.

Networks are intertwined

The most compelling reason for a multi-council owned new water organisation is that the current networks for provision of potable water, waste water processing and storm water

management are intrinsically joined. We believe more efficient and effective management of all three waters can be achieved under the asset ownership and stewardship of a single organisation which has the resources and mandate to run and improve services across the board.

For example, drinking water is sourced and transported from catchments in the Hutt Valley and beyond. The Porirua Wastewater plant not only serves the residents of Porirua City but Wellington City's northern suburbs.

The Porirua Stream carries storm water and any attendant pollutants from the northern suburbs of Wellington City to the receiving waters being Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour. Similarly, cross connected waste and storm pipes pollute catchments and ultimately the harbour itself.

Preferred model has access to more finance

While the Trust is wary about the accuracy of modelling showing future water charges being about a third less than the modified status-quo option, a new entity would have access to larger loans than PCC. Given the size of the current infrastructure deficit, solutions will entail significantly more expenditure than is currently available from ratepayer and territorial local authority loans.

Commitment to Te Mana o te Wai supported

The Trust fully supports all the outcomes sought by iwi/Maori as outlined on page 22 of the consultation document. These include a commitment to Te Mana o te Wai. The point is well made that the outcomes sought in Te Mana o te Wai endure beyond changing political cycles and direction.

Pledges in Harbour Accord must transfer to any new entity

If the five councils can agree on a multi-council approach, PHACCT urges that the pledges of PCC, WCC, GWRC and Ngāti Toa Rangatira in the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour Accord signed on 6 February 2025 be retained and that the commitments made on behalf of Wellington Water be transferred to the new entity. It has taken too long and a huge effort to get the Accord in place to see it strangled within a year of its birth. As Mayor Baker has said publicly on numerous occasions - the time for talk has passed, it's time for action to clean up our harbour.

We request that PCC reinforces its commitment to the Harbour Accord by ensuring the Accord is included in any statement of expectations that the Council will have with the new entity.

More emphasis required on stormwater management

Stormwater discharges and related non-point source run off contribute significantly to sediment and contaminant pollution of the harbour. The PCC material on the preferred option says very little about this and we consider the Council's position should be more explicit about the importance of stormwater management and the resources needed to manage discharges.

We also note that, in the PCC introduction, wastewater storage is mentioned. This raises the issue of cross contamination which poses a big risk to harbour pollution, especially bacterial contamination. Building tanks at great cost to store contaminated storm water and manage the load on the wastewater treatment station deals with the symptoms rather than cause of insufficient system capacity. The tanks themselves are also at risk of overflows. Again, management of this risk and network overflows generally must be another high priority for either of the options but, as with stormwater, is one we consider can be most effectively managed under Option 1.

PCC must retain harbour restoration as a strategic priority

Creation of a new water company, taking over assets and liabilities of the Councils for the three waters systems, should in no way be seen as an abrogation of the commitment made by the Porirua City Council to work for restoration of a healthy harbour.

If we are to properly address the harm done by nearly two centuries of environmental abuse by humans it will take efforts from all the councils, infrastructure providers, businesses and the community to all play a part in restoration of the ecological, cultural, and environmental integrity of the harbour in order that people can gather kaimoana, swim, and enjoy the waters of Te Awarua o Porirua without compromise.

In recent years PCC has been highly focussed on a widespread riparian planting programme. Planting alongside streams, around the harbour and on erosion prone slopes is one of the most effective measures available to reduce sediment flows into the harbour's waters. While PCC's water related services may diminish under the proposed model we urge the Council to continue to play a significant role in the reclothing of Papatūānuku within the city's urban and rural boundaries.

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