



**Hamilton Residents &
Ratepayers Association**
— incorporated —
Your Money, Your Vote



Our Target:
• Democracy
• Integrity
• Transparency
• Accountability

17 September 2019

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern
Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Prime Minister

Re: Public request for Hamilton City Council review

We are writing to ensure you are informed of our public request for an Independent Review Commission into Hamilton City Council and its operations.

We have copied in appropriate members of your Cabinet and associated state agencies because of the comprehensive and cross-ministry nature of the issues.

Our request to the incoming council for this public review arises from our investigations following widespread public concerns about council governance and management on significant issues including housing affordability and climate change, along with continuing misgivings on financial affairs.

Affordability and Climate Change

Our research shows the council is promoting growth at any cost when affordability is the core issue, and there is little regard for significant shifts in central government policy on affordable housing, urban development, infrastructure and transport services, and climate change. All this in the face of economic uncertainty nationally and globally. The council has lost millions of dollars on property deals, is grossly over-estimating its income and relying on debt to balance the books.

As well, there is confusion over who is in charge, and lessons not learned since the council was threatened by the government with sacking in 2011, and the Auditor-General criticised their financial reporting in 2016-2017.

Appointment of the Commission

Democracy suggests the incoming council should appoint the members of the proposed IRC from a public nomination process – as we have recommended.

However, because of the flow-on effect to local government generally, and the current low public esteem for councils, there are two aspects where we seek your government's engagement and advice:

We hope you will offer advice on the appointment of the commission's independent chair, and it is our recommendation as well that observer status be offered to appropriate representatives of your government. We ask that you and Cabinet agree to that. We would be willing to work with you to select a suitable appointee and confirm the requirements.



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Further: In the event the incoming council refuses to establish the proposed IRC in accordance with the timeframe and tasks we have outlined, we would seek your formal government intervention. Further information is available on the website hamiltonratepayers.com and on our email hcc2019review@gmail.com

Our group comes to you with the agreement of a wide range of citizen supporters, reflecting the four well-beings (economic, environmental, social and cultural issues), who come together because of their concerns.

We hope you will respond favourably to our call.

Signed

Raymond Mudford
PRESIDENT

Brief on Proposed Independent Review Commission

1. That the incoming Hamilton City Council (HCC) commit to establish an Independent Review Commission (IRC) in 2019 for the purposes outlined and agreed.
2. That a Commissioner chairperson be appointed as soon as possible after the 12 October election to guide the establishment of the commission and its work plan in liaison with HCC and appropriate Cabinet representatives.
3. That the IRC be established by 20 December 2019, to conduct its investigations and provide its report and recommendations prior to the finalising of HCC's 2020-2021 Annual Plan and reviewed 10-Year-Plan.
4. That the membership of the IRC be agreed with the elected Council and the Commissioner through a process of public nominations.
5. That appropriate expert advisors are to be recruited to assist the commission with its investigations.
6. That observer status to the commission be offered to Local MPs, Cabinet Ministers, the Local Government Commission, The Office of the Auditor General and other relevant state agencies, Local Government New Zealand, Directors' Institute, and appropriate recognised community groups representing the four well-beings (economic, environmental, social and cultural).
7. That the public be given the opportunity to offer submissions to the commission, both in writing and orally.

Further details can be found on the website hamiltonratepayers.com, including research materials and working papers.

Copies to CEO DPMC Brook Barrington information@dpmc.govt.nz
Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, and Ministers Grant Robertson (*Finance*), Phil Twyford (*Urban Development*), Megan Woods (*Housing*), Nanaia Mahuta (*Local Government*), Jenny Salesa (*Building and Construction*), Shane Jones (*Infrastructure & Regional Economic Development*), James Shaw (*Climate Change*)
Members of Parliament for Hamilton Jamie Strange, Tim Macindoe, David Bennett
Auditor General, Local Government Commission, Local Government New Zealand