



SUBMISSION ON:

Waitomo District Council Long-term Plan 2015-2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The Waikato District Health Board (Waikato DHB) serves a population of more than 360,270 people within 10 territorial authorities and two regional councils, stretching from the northern tip of Coromandel Peninsula to south of National Park and from Raglan and Awakino in the west to Waihi in the east.
- 1.2.** The Waikato DHB has five hospitals and two continuing care facilities; community services, older persons and rehabilitation service, population health service and mental health and addiction services (collectively known as its provider arm Health Waikato). It directly employs around 6083 doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and support staff.
- 1.3.** The Waikato DHB also funds and monitors (through contracts) a large number of other health and disability services that are delivered by independent providers such as GPs and practice nurses, rest homes, community laboratories, dentists, iwi health services, Pacific peoples' health services, and many other non-government organisations and agencies.
- 1.4.** The Waikato DHB is extensively engaged in providing services in the region both directly through the provider wing of the organisation and indirectly through other providers. These include personal health services and public health or population based health services
- 1.5.** The following submission represents the views of Population Health Waikato DHB. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Waikato District Health Board. Population Health provides public health services for the people living within the Waikato DHB region. Population Health is focused on providing early intervention and prevention services that improve, promote and protect the health of population groups within the Waikato DHB region. It works to help ensure all people in the Waikato have opportunities to access services and make choices that enable them to live long and healthy lives.

2. Population Health's position

2.1 Population Health has a strong focus and emphasis on the determinants of health or more simply, the factors that have the greatest influence on health. Opportunities for health start long before the need for medical care, and begins where we live, learn, work, and play.

2.2 Our service recognises the importance of local government as a key stakeholder. Significant influences on the health and wellbeing of people in the community lie outside the health sector. Local government's policies and decisions influence where and how people live their lives i.e. their social, cultural and economic environments. The determinants of health and the impact of resource distribution on health and wellbeing are strongly influenced by these factors.

2.3 Population Health acknowledges that recent changes to legislation have removed councils' focus on promoting the four wellbeings and re-oriented their approach towards improving efficiency as part of the Better Local Government Programme. However, local government has a mandate; direct and indirect, to protect and promote health under two key pieces of legislation. The Health Act 1956 s23 states "*it shall be the duty of every local authority to improve, promote and protect public health within its district ...*", and the Resource Management Act 1991 s5 states "*... people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety ...*". Both place specific responsibilities on local governments.

2.4 Current health challenges often have less to do with sanitation and more to do with wider health determinants such as the impacts of current planning; the reliance on private motor vehicle transport, social dislocation, and the health-related risk factors that may follow, such as heart disease and diabetes. Our service will provide comment from this public health perspective.

3. Acknowledgement

3.1 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the long term plan. Population Health recognises that considerable consultation and collaboration has already occurred in developing this document. The Long Term Plan 2015-2025 has been reviewed by Population Health and the following comments are provided.

3.2 A symbol has been used to guide Population Health's response and is outlined below:

Symbol/key	Population Health's position
✓	support in full or part
*	recommend further considerations
✗	does not support

Topic and comment	Page reference	Key
<p>General</p> <p>Population Health congratulates Waitomo District in the impressive progress it has made in leading your community's recovery from the financial, environmental and leadership problems of the past. A strong local government with genuine community partnership is itself, a positive determinant for improved health outcomes. Population Health remains committed to supporting your Council in this journey wherever we can.</p>		
<p>Strategic Direction and Community Outcomes</p> <p>Population Health <u>commends</u> Council for engaging with its community and wider stakeholders to guide the development of the district over the next 10 years.</p> <p>We particularly <u>commend</u> Council's commitment to achieving its vision for the district under its four community outcome banners and ensuring outcomes are integrated with Council's key areas of focus.</p> <p>Our service <u>strongly commends</u> Council for the introduction of the 'Effective Leadership' banner. Population Health <u>encourages</u> all local governments to use their often underestimated leadership role in relation to policy and advocacy to support their communities to lead healthier and more productive lives. In many cases this involves little or no expenditure.</p> <p>Demographic Change</p> <p>Population Health <u>congratulates</u> Council in its acceptance of demographic change, and planning accordingly. This is well covered in both recognition of the need for suitable and reliable employment for the relatively large proportion of young people, and for supporting the older people of the community. Both population groups are a tremendous asset for any community, but young people may well be forced to leave for employment. We support Waitomo's participation in the Mayor's Task Force for jobs and any other initiatives that Council can identify that will help retain the young people of the community.</p>	<p>Consultation Document pg. 4</p> <p>Consultation Document pg.7</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>Economic growth</p> <p>Population Health <u>supports</u> Council's direction in growing the local economy by effectively promoting the district's attractions and supporting local business initiatives and projects. We do have concerns that Waitomo, probably the biggest tourism asset in the area, has less than adequate water and wastewater treatment. A disease outbreak related to this village's services would have a very negative economic impact on the entire district.</p>	<p>Consultation Document pg. 9</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>*</p>

<p>Sewage treatment and disposal, Water Supplies, Stormwater</p> <p>Population Health has long been concerned about the safety of drinking water and sewage disposal in Waitomo Village (see above). We understand the complexities surrounding any possible transfer of these facilities to Waitomo District Council, but we believe it is important that some progress should be made within the scope of this new ten year plan. Population Health offers its support with advocacy and facilitation of progress towards a solution.</p> <p>More widely, Population Health supports Council's intention to maintain its infrastructure to a reasonable level throughout the District. External issues, and in particular the housing problems of Auckland, may well see businesses seeking to relocate to smaller centres during the 10 year view of this Long Term Plan. Te Kuiti's more affordable housing and location on major road and rail routes is an asset in this regard.</p> <p>Community Water Fluoridation (CWF)</p> <p>Population Health encourages Council to consider the introduction of CWF to the larger supplies council provides such as Te Kuiti. The poor state of oral health in New Zealand is becoming a matter of national concern. Recently, there has been both legal and further scientific support for the benefit, safety and legality of drinking water fluoridation. In particular, in a specific review, the Royal Society of New Zealand has confirmed that valid scientific evidence supports the effectiveness and safety of CWF and it provides benefit for all people with their natural teeth. Population Health is well aware that this is a difficult issue for local authorities but asks Waitomo District Council to use your leadership role in promoting fluoridation of the drinking water you supply. The population benefits are greatest for the more deprived communities, who have least access to preventative and restorative oral health care.</p> <p>Some financial assistance for setting up CWF may be available from the Ministry of Health and our service would support you with any application and subsequent advocacy.</p>	<p>Consultation Document pg. 12</p>	<p>*</p> <p>✓</p> <p>*</p>
<p>Community Connectivity and Development</p> <p>Our service commends Council for its continued support of the Waitomo Youth Council and other key areas of youth engagement such as noted in the consultation document. These programmes help shape youth attitudes and involvement in their communities and can result in youth becoming life-long contributors to local well-being.</p>	<p>Consultation Document pg. 10</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>Roads and Footpaths Activity</p> <p>Population Health advocates for continued maintenance and development of footpaths.</p> <p>Footpaths that are maintained and well lit are a key part of universal access principles. Footpaths contribute to personal safety and</p>	<p>Consultation Document pg. 12</p>	<p>✓</p>

<p>security, accessibility and community cohesion. Footpaths, support alternative transportation modes particularly for vulnerable population groups such as children, those without cars, the disabled and the elderly. Conversely, a lack of adequate footpaths will have a disproportionate effect on vulnerable population groups. This is an important consideration in a territorial authority such as yours, where levels of deprivation are higher than the national average, and where public transport is unlikely ever to be meet the needs of residents without private transport.</p>		
<p>Revenue and Financing Policy (RFP) Change Proposals</p> <p>Population Health supports Council in containing current and projected rates increases and asks Council to consider those living in the lowest deciles who may not be well placed to accommodate increased costs. Low incomes limit the ability of people to meet their basic needs. Low incomes are also associated with poorer overall health outcomes.</p>	<p>Consultation Document pg. 14-21</p>	<p>✓ *</p>
<p>Smokefree Councils and Outdoor Areas</p> <p>Population Health acknowledges and commends Council's role in the successful partnership with our Health Promoters and community which resulted in children's art work being made into smokefree plaques and erected in playgrounds as smokefree signs.</p> <p>Population Health encourages Council to develop a formal Smokefree Council Policy. Smokefree Councils promote playgrounds, swimming pools, parks, and events as smokefree. Such policies are of particular benefit in parks with children's playgrounds. Smokefree parks and playgrounds provide opportunities to reduce smoking being modelled to children as normal behaviour and help reduce smoking uptake rates¹. Such policies have been adopted in many districts within New Zealand and internationally, and evaluation reports have been positive. Smokefree policies have the additional benefit of reducing tobacco litter, fire risk and exposure to second hand smoke. Policies also align and contribute to the New Zealand Government's commitment to making New Zealand smokefree by 2025.</p> <p>Population Health supports local authorities to plan for, promote and support Smokefree environments and interventions through partnerships based on shared strategic vision and coordinated investment.</p>		<p>✓ *</p>

¹ Thomson, G., Wilson, N., Edwards, R., & Woodward, A. (2008). Should smoking in outside public spaces be banned? Yes. BMJ, 337, a2806. doi: 10.1136/bmj.a2806

4. Concluding comments

Waikato DHB, Population Health welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with Waitomo District Council on matters affecting community health and wellbeing.

Waikato DHB Population Health does not wish to be heard in support of this submission.

5. Contact address

Any comments on this submission or requests for further information should be addressed to:

Dell Hood
Public Health Medicine Specialist/ Medical Officer of Health
Waikato DHB Population Health
Private Bag 3200
Hamilton 3400
dell.hood@waikatodhb.health.nz