

Hastings For Sale!

By Tom Belford

Put yourself in the shoes of a Hastings Councillor for a few moments, and consider how you would deal with this scenario.

Lawrence Yule, Chair of the Regional Sports Park Trust (that's Mayor Yule to most of us) sat down in his Trust capacity with Higgins Contractors, the folks who build so many roads around here.

They said: Give us the contract to build the roadwork in and around the sports park — a job worth \$1.8 million — without having to go through competitive tender, and we'll donate \$500,000 to the sports park.

Trust Chairman Yule brought this proposal to the Hastings Council, where it was discussed in public-excluded session. The deal was sanctioned by the Council. The Trust awarded the contract, and with subsequent fanfare, the "gift" by Higgins to the sports park was welcomed and announced by the Trust.

Here's what the confidential staff briefing paper for the Council said: "Higgins Limited has indicated the sponsorship agreement is contingent on them being awarded the adjacent roading works at the same time as the internal works." Adding: "The current contracting market is tight and the allocation of this quantum of works to a contractor without going through a competitive pricing process may cause concern within the local



contracting industry." Note that there's no mention of possible ratepayer concern!

Later in the memo, and even more remarkably, the staff observes: "...the Council may be subject to some criticism from the contracting industry for removing a significant component of work in Council's programme from the market. Counter to this is the argument that all contractors could have taken the initiative

and approached the Regional Sports Park Trust with similar sponsorship proposals to that which Higgins is offering." (italics added)

In other words: "What's the matter with these other contractors, anyway ... don't they realise any of them would have been welcome to 'entice' the Council/Trust with a 'donation' offer?"

Higgins certainly seems to know how the

insiders play. The *DomPost* reported the comments of Higgins' chief executive: "While it was unusual for a donation and contract to seem to be tied up together 'it's not the first time it's happened'."

The briefing memo is in effect an open invitation — a flashing billboard — to would-be contractors and other aspiring vendors ... LET'S MAKE A DEAL!

Indeed the Trust's chief executive, Jock Mackintosh, perturbed by public criticism of the Higgins deal, remarked to the *DomPost* that "politicking" on the matter would "potentially damage funding" opportunities.

"Politicking"? Confronted with serious ethical concerns, if not auditor-challengeable Council malfeasance, the Trust executive's takeaway is: Hey, this bad publicity could screw up other deals like this we're trying to make.

Taking a principled approach, this might look like highly valuable and profitable public contracts, either directly or indirectly controlled by the Council, are "for sale" on the promise of "contributions" to the sports park. Forget competition, transparency, and public tenders ... all of which are designed to protect the public interest.

Hastings For Sale!
Cont. on Pg 9

Cranford Meltdown

By Tom Belford

When we last reported, an outside "audit" was underway of Cranford Hospice. That report, slated for delivery by April 9, is now expected at the end of April.

Meanwhile, at the instigation of management, on April 6 a private investigator from the firm Abraham Consultants began investigating "leaks" about complaints at Cranford. Presbyterian Trust (PSEC) management is seeking to determine who on the staff is responsible for giving information to the complainant who triggered the independent audit, as well as to "the media" (read: BayBuzz).

PSEC and Cranford managers met with staff on March 23rd to warn them of the investigation, and sent formal notice by letter on April 1. However, staff has not been informed of their legal right to refuse to meet with the investigator.

This is a blatant attempt by management to further intimidate the caregiving staff at Cranford.

Keep in mind that a major root of the deep disaffection amongst Cranford staff — and complaints to the audit team — is precisely this culture of bullying and intimidation.

Incredible! In the face of complaints serious enough, in the judgment of the Health & Disabilities Commissioner, to warrant an

ongoing independent audit of Cranford's practices and dysfunctional culture, management hires a private investigator to conduct a witch-hunt. What don't these people get?!

All this after two all-staff "mediation" sessions in December and February intended to improve the organizational culture and give Cranford a fresh start.

To all the kind people who dropped coins in the cans of nice ladies raising funds for Cranford recently ... is this what you had in mind? A gold coin for a witch-hunt? How about all you corporate sponsors ... is this the kind of management practice you're keen to endorse?

And what does the DHB, Cranford's primary funder and supervisor think about this? DHB staff were unwilling to comment, terming the private investigation an "internal matter" to PSEC. I suspect some DHB Board members think otherwise.

In addition, staff are being told that because a few disgruntled employees have spoiled the reputation of Cranford, the hospice has been unable to recruit a new Medical Director. [In February, the current director announced he would be leaving this month.] If this situation persists, in-patient service might need to be shut down (i.e., all patients treated at home,

in institutions, or at the hospital). It seems like PSEC is preparing for such a contingency by laying the groundwork to blame a "handful of complainers" for any reduction in service.

But judging from information BayBuzz receives almost daily, staff disaffection is in fact widespread, with more to surface.

In light of these developments, it seems almost incidental that back pay issues with nurses have still not been resolved ... the Nurses' Union has re-engaged on the matter with the Department of Labour.

Is this the profile of an effectively functioning institution?

Yet through it all, the nurses — who are totally devoted to giving Cranford's patients the best possible care — have soldiered on. They do so in a setting whose already abnormal stress — which most of us couldn't bear — has been greatly amplified.

In any other organizational context, these employees would have linked arms long ago and issued an ultimatum: Either the management goes, or we go.

Here, the managers are inexcusable. The caregivers are priceless.

Because Cranford is at the meltdown point, it's time for the public, which cares deeply about the

institution, to ponder who they think holds its soul. Is it the managers, who bear responsibility for the worsening situation. Or the caregivers, who continue with determination to honour their profession and their personal commitment to their patients.

Breaking Through 'Berlin Wall'

Can Napier and Hastings continue to exist with an invisible Berlin Wall between them?

Or can they call a truce and form a united front before someone does it for them?

Kathy Webb investigates... Pg 4 and 5.



FROM THE EDITOR

Tom Belford



Our theme this month is local governance. Amalgamation is the “800 pound gorilla” on our local scene, with local elected leaders and the public divided at this early stage. Kathy Webb, in *Na-Pure and Ha-Stinks*, looks at the divided opinion on amalgamation, as well as “shared services,” its more incremental rival approach. Along the way, she provides some entertaining historical perspective on the issue. But amalgamation is only part of the local governance issue. Some local bodies have unique political challenges of their own.

In Hastings, good governance has been tossed aside as the Council side-steps its own tendering rules – which require competitive tendering of contracts worth more than \$50,000 – and awards a \$1.8 million sports park road project to Higgins Contractors, in return for a \$500,000 “donation” to the facility. We look at this transaction in *Hastings For Sale!*

At the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council, death could come quickly, judging from the National-led Government’s recent sacking of Environment Canterbury. Or it could come through a thousand small cuts, as various dynamics nick away at regional councils’ current authority. HBRC’s challenging future is examined in *Sunset for Regional Council?* The Canterbury sacking ruined poor Tim Gilbertson’s Easter (yes, he’s still a Councillor), as you’ll read in *Beware of the Sacker!*

At the Hawke’s Bay DHB, things should return to normal this election year. Well maybe, as you see in *Take a Hiding for Nothing*. Yes, once again Hawke’s Bay voters will elect seven of the eleven members of the DHB. But the

question is posed: Why would anyone want a job almost designed to fail, with huge problems and minimal authority? And will an elected or appointed Board member run the show?

Columnist Des Ratima gives his view on dedicated Maori seats in any local amalgamation. But only after voicing his concerns about Maori health underspending by the DHB, and his strong objection to “use of the name of ‘Papatuanuku’ for a channel that is carrying the water residue from the East Clive Treatment Station to the ocean ... as some sort of Maori poo filter.” His column’s title says it all ... *Queen Elizabeth Outfall*.

A number of articles provide some relief from the governance theme ...

Art columnist Roy Dunningham reviews the Creative Hawke’s Bay Invitational, now at Hastings City Art Gallery, calling this year’s exhibition “one of the most consistent in quality that I can recall.”

The launching of Film Hawke’s Bay is described in *Cameras Rolling*. This unit, seed-funded by Venture Hawke’s Bay, will help Hawke’s Bay compete as a venue for film and television productions.

Columnist Anna Lorck styles herself as *Florence Nightingale*, championing vaccinations and waging war against the common cold.

Finally, in *Tightening the Noose*, resident humourist Brendan Webb mounts a defense of his rescued Jack Russell named McIntyre, who seems to have escaped Wairoa one step ahead of the law, only to drag his owner into the frustrations of Hastings dog by-laws. Enjoy!

Issue Updates



Views over Ocean Beach.

Ocean Beach Victory

The Environment Court has ruled that Andy Lowe’s Hill Country Corp must pay the full costs — some \$300,000 — incurred by the Hastings Council in reviewing his proposed private plan change to build 1,000 housing units at Ocean Beach.

This is a terrific victory most notably for the 12,000 people who signed the Friends of Ocean Beach “Just Say No” petition and for the 200 submitters who opposed the plan change ... but also for all Hastings ratepayers who otherwise would have had to foot the bill.

Chris Ryan and Tom Belford, as leaders of the petition drive, prepared a submission to the Environment Court, which Chris was allowed to present despite the opposition of Hill Country’s lawyers. Here’s part of what he said:

“If Hill Country could possibly have been initially blind to the depth of opposition to its plan, surely the collecting of over 12,000 signatures in approximately six weeks would have awakened it. Yet they persisted.

And as a result, a huge amount of time, money and energy was spent by many citizens, as well as Council staff, dealing with the Ocean Beach affair. We think that it is only fair that Hill Country pay their accounts in full, which even then will only partly compensate the Council and these many people for their personal contribution into protecting this wonderful local asset.

Hill Country chose to spend its money on this project; the rest of us had no choice but to respond.”

Tukituki In Suspense

Determined developers never call it quits. And that’s the case with Andy Coltart and his Tukituki river-side development at one of the river’s most scenic and recreationally enjoyed locations. Last month BayBuzz reported that Hastings Council planning staff recommended denying - full stop - Coltart’s application to intensively develop a 25 hectare property along the Tukituki (indeed, 8.5 hectares is the riverbed and river channel itself).

Staff concluded that landscape and recreational values at Horseshoe Bend would be

compromised so adversely by such intensive development that mitigation measures could not achieve the protections required by the District Plan and the RMA. They further argued that granting this application would create a precedent conducive to similar development along the Tukituki, thwarting both existing and pending rural development policy for the District, which aims to protect the rural character and amenity of the Tukituki area.

Rather than challenge the staff recommendation in the normal hearing process, Coltart has taken another tack. Withdrawing his earlier plan to have the matter decided with the property classified as “Rural”, he has forced HDC to concede that, because of historical oversight, the land at issue is in fact un-zoned. Therefore the Council has no authority over land use on the property! Coltart can build whatever and wherever he wants on the property; only if he seeks to create separate titles will the Council have any leverage on the situation.

Once again it seems that determined developers with clever lawyers can generally find a loophole in the District Plan ... in this case one big enough to drive a bus through.

The Council staff still holds the view that Coltart’s planned intensive development would be irredeemably damaging. No environmental facts have changed. Discussions continue amongst Coltart, Hastings Council and opposing submitter Bruno Chambers.

For now the fate of this spectacular unspoiled stretch of the Tukituki is in Coltart’s hands ... and public goodwill is his to earn or lose. Ultimately, the RMA might stand in his way.

Maori Health Underspend

Last month we reported that \$947,000 allocated for Maori health services will remain unspent by DHB this year (the same thing happened the previous year). Now we’ve learned that the unspent amount could rise to \$1.3 million, despite the protests of the DHB’s Maori Relationship Board.

In a recent Health Board discussion of the underspend, various Board members expressed concern, noting that the health profile for Maori in Hawke’s Bay is persistently terrible.

The DHB Board discussion ended with a request by Sir John Anderson for a full presentation on these issues at the April 21 Board meeting. For the benefit of the community and public accountability, hopefully that presentation will be made in open session.

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Des Ratima Columnist



Queen Elizabeth Outfall

In the March **BayBuzz Digest** I am quoted in the *Maori Health Underspend and Stinkin' Pipes* articles.

I have since spoken to a number of people I respect to test my thoughts against their views. I am not surprised to find that they share the same concerns about the underspend and the use of the name of "Papatuanuku" for a channel that is carrying the water residue from the East Clive Treatment Station to the ocean ... as some sort of Maori poo filter.

Among Maori, there is concern that Maori health funding has not been spent on the issues for which the funding was destined. I have reached this conclusion without any research or hard statistical facts ... just good old common sense. How can you have an underspend if you are delivering? So where is the cause for the underspend, which I believe now tops \$1m? What will happen to the funds? More importantly, how can Maori communities access this underspend to address the health needs they know exist and already have solutions for?

Regarding the East Clive treatment plant, the use of Maori cosmology and philosophy to provide an inclusive Maori feel about this entire process is insulting. And this is not just my view anymore. There is a need to review the use of Maori values and Atua when describing the work of the "poo factory." Those responsible need to reflect on the way in which names are to be used and the consultation necessary before they can be used.

Having just gone through the process of changing the street name of Hapuku to Hapuku through the Hastings District Council, it was a matter of changing one letter to correct. Yet it required the efforts of researchers, consultation with community, and debate in Council before the agreement to change the letter was approved. All of which was duly complied with. The outcome was a small naming ceremony with descendants of Hapuku present alongside residents of the street and members from HDC.

With the treatment plant, the use of significant and spiritual names from Maori ancestry did not reach the Maori community for consultation. Would it have passed the legislative test? Was there community buy in? I call for the names to be changed! Maybe I could propose some names of my own to replace them ... like Queen Elizabeth Outfall, or Prince Phillip Pipes! Nah, maybe a bit too radical. Hopefully, however, I have made my point.

Amalgamation has been spoken about recently, with the announcement that Mayor Lawrence is prepared to use the opportunity of the upcoming local body elections to advocate the amalgamation of local councils. It certainly is the right time to make this viewpoint available for debate and I am sure this will occur.

What might amalgamation mean for Maori? Often there is confusion as to who, or which local body, is responsible for what. A one-stop shop will certainly address this matter. One set of rates must also be advantageous, from the perspective of less administration and therefore lower rates. Infrastructure, administration, finances, staff rationalisation must also be of benefit to the communities of Napier, Hastings and other Districts.



The Papatuanuku channel at the new wastewater treatment plant at East Clive, which carries the water residue from the plant out to the ocean.

Although the idea of amalgamation is not new and has certainly been tested in the region before, unsuccessfully I might add, times have changed and so too have governments and perspectives. So from the viewpoint that amalgamation is very likely to proceed (if you remain unconvinced, look to the super city for inspiration), Maori have to determine their place in any new governance model.

From the beginning of Maori and Pakeha associations, Maori wanted a partnership. If you need reassurance, look to the Treaty of Waitangi for inspiration. That aspiration has not changed. As someone once said "relationships are everything." There has been a proposal in the rhetoric of local amalgamation that Maori could have seats in the new council, and therefore Maori aspirations will be met. I personally do not think that one necessary follows the other.

In the settlements of Treaty claims by Iwi throughout the country there has not been a demand for inclusion in council by way of Maori seats.

At one time I thought that this was the best way of representation, that Maori-only seats would benefit everyone. Today I am of the view that Maori-only seats are not only inappropriate, but also not the best solution for Maori participation.

Relationships are the model and solution of the future. Maori would benefit by using their achievements at Treaty negotiations to better equip themselves for life in the post settlement era. This includes how Maori will engage with local councils.

The interests of Maori and the community might be better served by having co-governance and co-management models developed and implemented as opposed to seats.

COUNTERPOINT Anna Lorck



Florence Nightingale

The man in our house has a cough – it's a nagging sound that I hear each time it arrives and it always gets worse. He does little to help himself. Instead, he's in the camp of fighting the cough "naturally." He'll sweat it out with a bike ride in the rain. It will eventually end in a trip to the doctor and antibiotics.

I don't have much sympathy, and in the middle of the night a kick in the leg is what he gets to go find himself the couch. When I get sick – and it's very rarely – I go to bed, I take drugs and manuka honey, I rest and I get better.

I also can't stand snotty noses, and children who are sent to school or childcare with it pouring out ... usually because they are wearing nothing more than a t-shirt and don't have a hanky. They are contagious. They will infect mine. And I will have to take time off work to look after the first, then the second, third, fourth and now fifth. And then I'll catch it.

The house goes down, and I go with it. Then I'm behind, all because some other parent didn't take their responsibilities seriously, and neither did the school. Sick children should be sent home. And so should adults. Stay away. You are no good and what's more you'll take more of the workforce with you.

I prepare for winter. Like it or not my children are dressed for the conditions. Forced to wear skivvies, hats, scarves, itchy woollen singlets and home-knitted unfashionable jerseys. They also have a waterproof parka, because they walk and bike to school ... rain, hail or shine. Heaven help them if I catch them with it not on (I do the drive by).

"But you can't catch a cold from being cold." Sorry, you can. I know. I have proof. It's based on common sense. Your temperature goes down, you start to shiver and your nose starts to run. And if you don't warm up, your defenses go down and you catch a bug.

Defense – that's the first way to reduce your risks.

We have vaccinations for a reason ... they

strongly reduce your chances of catching a killer disease. That's right, they protect your children (just like seatbelts and fences around pools).

When I took my first baby to have her jabs I thought little of it. Now, nearly fourteen years on, it's not something to mention. We almost sneak them in, just in case someone challenges us. "Are you sure you want to vaccinate?" Where did all this come from?

If one of these anti-vaccine campaigners happened to challenge me with babe-in-arm, they'd be seeing stars. Because I'm a lioness and you don't mess with my cubs.

I'm not saying I feel completely good about it. My five girls will each face a decision about the new human papillomavirus cervical cancer vaccine. A decision that as teenagers they will respectively make.

Until then, I am in charge, in control and I take this very seriously. Even more so after one of them caught whooping cough between the vaccination course and stopped breathing. We raced in the ambulance to the hospital. A lumbar puncture and five days in isolation send a big wake up call about how precious life is, how quickly things can change and how children are defenseless.

This month all but the man of the house (because he thinks he's tougher) for the first time had a flu jab, brought on by the swine flu. We took it in stride, even me who has never had the flu and fears needles.

On top of this we all take a course of Buccaline (on my great grandmother's advice) to protect against cold complications. You do it every twelve weeks through the winter and it costs about \$13 a dose. And then there's malt, and Vitamin C.

With my defenses in place we're as protected as we can be ... against all those others who won't or can't be bothered. We'll still be on the netball court in the pouring rain, soaked to the skin. But we'll be home for hot showers and milos, and we'll get through another winter.

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Na-Pure and Ha-Stinks



By Kathy Webb

It's an old expression, and childish, but it encapsulates perfectly the sibling-style rivalry and petty jealousies that have dragged Napier and Hastings apart for as long as anyone can remember.

Two small provincial cities with just 20km of highway between them, economies and populations inextricably intertwined, they face basically the same challenges and issues at every turn. But they've niggled and squabbled and gone their own respective ways, seemingly forever.

One airport for the region? Let's fight about it for a decade.

One hospital for the region? Over my dead body.

A university? Argue over location until the region loses it.

Fact: When the two cities' newspapers merged in 1999, an irritated Napier man phoned the new newspaper to complain that he resented reading Hastings death notices among the Napier ones.

The pettiness is more subtle these days, although not hard to find. And it's not confined to everyday people. "Napier is the only official city in Hawke's Bay", says a website about Napier, because "Hastings is administered as a district". The Napier City, Hastings District and Hawke's Bay Regional councils have all recently installed completely different new computer systems, and all criticise the other two for not working toward shared software.

It defies explanation.

According to Statistics NZ, at the time of the 2006 Census Napier had a usually-resident population of 55,359. Hastings District had 70,842, Wairoa had 8484, and Central Hawke's Bay 12,957. That's a regional total of 147,642.

Governing those people are 53 elected representatives, making one representative for every 2,792 people in a regional population that isn't growing. Apart from their five sets of elected representatives, the councils have five separate bureaucracies, five separate information technology systems, five rating systems, five district plans, five different sets of by-laws and policies, and so on.

Why? Apparently we and all our communities are so different from each other it's impossible to have just one set of everything. And of course we don't entirely trust each other. And we're not having *our* rates money spent to benefit another part of the region.

How did this start? No one seems to know, although one theory is that its genesis was

competition between the cities to be regional bases for central government offices and services.

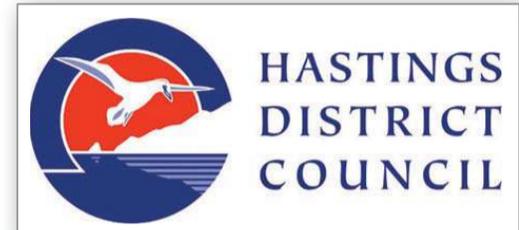
To be fair, the past two decades have seen a degree of unity at the highest levels of each council. That has at least achieved first tentative steps pencilled in toward rationalisation of services to ratepayers. But history doesn't inspire much hope. Attempts to unify the cities' library services collapsed after 18 months of negotiation. And while moves were being made toward a joint contract for kerbside rubbish collection, Hastings went ahead and let one for the unusually long term of six years. That cost Napier an extra \$100,000 for a 44-month contract, just to get its maturity date aligned with the Hastings one.

Some people told *Baybuzz* shared services are about as good as it's going to get; others say nothing useful will ever come from tinkering around the edges, that full amalgamation is necessary if Hawke's Bay is to survive and thrive in a super-sizing world. Yet another says amalgamation is needed but won't happen because vested interests will scare the voters.

Napier Councillor Bill Dalton and Hastings Councillor Wayne Bradshaw believe there is no mood for amalgamation, and that shared services are the most realistic first-base. As they see it, shared services such as libraries, dog control, parking management, insurances, liquor licences, health regulations for restaurants, waste management, and tendering out Council requirements such as rates accounts could eventually achieve all the benefits of amalgamation without the upheaval, while leaving each Council's political wings to do their own thing.

However, Mr Bradshaw also believes both cities have left it a little late; that there is now a plan in the Beehive to effect Auckland-style amalgamations around the country and effectively hand the Government control of key assets such as water and transport nationwide.

Councillors Bradshaw and Dalton have probably had the highest profiles in promoting Napier-Hastings unity in recent times. They planned a co-ordinated campaign last year and each went head-on with his respective Council to win agreement for investigations into extensive shared services. "It's hard to divorce shared services and amalgamation, but shared services



WAYNE BRADSHAW:

"There's a whole lot going on that we're not being told the truth about."



LAWRENCE YULE:

"To get our share of resources and facilities, we need to be completely regional in our approach..."

creates immediate efficiencies. I'd have thought that would be a top priority for Councils, but it's only since Bill and I raised the issue last year there's been some momentum. It should have been done years ago, so our rates wouldn't be as high as they are now, but political agendas come before practicalities," Mr Bradshaw says.

He believes Hawke's Bay is in the firing line for a shotgun wedding initiated by Wellington, "a la Auckland". "Lawrence Yule is the go-to guy for Wellington. There's a whole lot going on that we're not being told the truth about. This sort of thing doesn't happen by default. It's well thought out and planned behind the scenes for the desired outcome," he says.

"Mr Yule wants to appear to be a superior communicator, so you put it out there to try to get buy-in to the process, but you would have thought he would talk to his own Council before announcing it, but he didn't. Councillors were shocked. The first we heard about it was from the media. The issue is, why do we want amalgamation, but we are not having that debate. How can anyone make a decision out there on the basis of political rhetoric? We also have to look at participation in any vote. Is a 40 per cent turnout a mandate?"

Mr Dalton says "Napier is leading the way" in looking for shared services, evidenced by its preparedness to spend \$100,000 aligning its waste collection contracting dates with Hastings. "I object strenuously to the idea of a shotgun wedding. We should continue to work co-operatively. It will become apparent in the future that it's working so closely we might as well be one, or that we have milked all the savings to be had, so why amalgamate. There are some trying to force the issue as a political agenda, not as a real benefit."

"I'm not totally anti-amalgamation, but if it happens now it will be a forced marriage. There is no mood for it in Napier," Mr Dalton says.

Despite the pessimism of Councillors Bradshaw and Dalton, the Hastings and Regional Councils, under pressure from the Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce, have agreed to begin studies of the potential for amalgamation, each putting \$50,000 into their budgets for independent research. Napier has not set aside any money for research and says it won't formally discuss the issue until next year.

Mayor Barbara Arnott told the Chamber "we believe that if amalgamation is to occur for 2013, then the research relating to any proposal should be easily achieved within the three years following the 2010 election. It is important that the research is appropriate for the time and the Councils who are involved in the process of change."

The reluctance is almost palpable. The trouble is – history.

Historical Histrionics

In 1988, a reform-minded Labour government announced a nationwide shake-up of local government. Napier escaped with only minor tweaking to its boundaries, and in October 1989 became a 104 square kilometre political island surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the new 5217 sq km Hastings District, which was created by the amalgamation of Hastings City, Hawke's Bay County, and Havelock North Borough.

A new entity, the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, was formed to overlay and manage natural resources across the entire area from Wairoa to Central Hawke's Bay. It scored ownership of the Port of Napier, a hefty endowment of land raised out of the sea by the 1931 Hawke's Bay Earthquake, and was instantly a very wealthy entity. Napier also got some earthquake land, which gave it a nice nest egg. Hastings got none.

By 1989, Hastings owed \$32 million. The county owed \$1.5m, and Havelock North about \$2m, so

Nearly The End Of The World

little comfort in being part of history. With long, proud traditions, carefully husbanded resources, and considerable assets accumulated, it had negligible debt. Its elected farmer

representatives scrutinised every project from the construction of stopbanks to the grading and shingling of the smallest country roads. It debated at length one day whether the fruit and vege stall on Havelock Road should be allowed to stock imported bananas when the rules clearly stipulated that only produce grown on site should be on the shelves.

This was an organisation that attended to its duties and saw no need for change, let alone dissolution. Its brand new building on the corner of Omahu Road and Oak Avenue in Hastings had been built only a year before, to carry the council through its next 100 years.

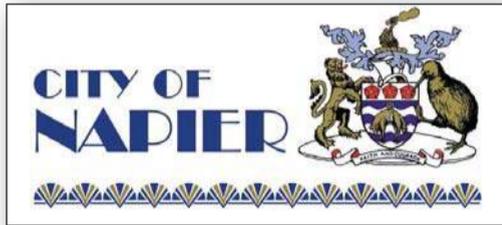
But the political landscape around it had changed. The end was nigh.

"It's a raid," screamed the front page headline.

Hawke's Bay County Councillors, aghast at the impending forced merger of their council with those of Hastings City and Havelock North Borough, saw only destruction ahead. All they had worked for, all they had achieved, was about to be seized and ruined by their profligate, debt-ridden urban cousins. The *Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune*, carried the tale of their worst fears.

It was 1989, and similar scenarios were being played out all around the country as central government gave local government a huge shake-up.

The Hawke's Bay County Council found



Hawke's Bay will bury its fragmented head in the sand at its own peril, Mr Yule says. "To get our share of resources and facilities, we need to be completely regional in our approach, not two populations of 60,000 or 70,000 each, who sometimes compete. It's not the best way of getting a share of the action."

The region as a whole must work to counteract the ageing of its population (over-65-year-olds are predicted to make up 26 per cent of it by 2045), get the most out of business and tourism opportunities through assets such as the port and airport, and put more focus on the management of natural resources, including water harvesting.

"The regional council alone can't do that. They are doing some good work in some areas, but the territorial authorities need to be lined up with that to maximise some opportunities."

People now appear to be generally more comfortable with the concept of a regional government, Mr Yule says.

"Particularly in the past two years, people have been asking me about it, can it happen here?"

And I look out five, 10, 20 years and see the challenges we face. We have some of the best schools in the country, climate, good quality of life. People want to live here, if they could find employment they would move here in a jiff."

The regional, Napier and Hastings councils draw in \$150 million of rates a year between them.

A leaner bureaucracy could achieve savings of 10 per cent, which would free up \$15 million dollars a year, he says. "Even \$10 million could make our province grow," Mr Yule says.

He cites the three separate information technology systems installed in recent years by the Napier, Hastings and regional councils, and shakes his head.

The Government has no political appetite for more super-sizing of councils this year, he says, but eventually - maybe five or 10 years away - it will. And change will come to Hawke's Bay.

It would be better if the region took the initiative now, and worked out its own preferences.

Mr Yule is proposing a new two-tier system, mainly for Napier and Hastings but with the door open to Central Hawke's Bay and Wairoa if they wish to be part of it.

[You can read his proposal here: www.baybuzz.co.nz/archives/1607]

He hopes people will consider his plan and throw in more suggestions. And if, after investigation, consultation and a referendum, voters opt for a new form of regional governance that doesn't comply with current law, a Hawke's Bay MP could be dispatched to Parliament with a request for a law change.

The government has already indicated its willingness to listen, he says. By the same token, "if people don't want it, it won't happen."

Cont. on Pg 6

BILL DALTON:

"I object strenuously to the idea of a shotgun wedding. We should continue to work co-operatively."

BARBARA ARNOTT:

"I think people need proper facts rather than emotional stuff, and not giving them the impression that it will save them in their pockets."

their fears of being lumbered with urban debt were understandable.

Their amalgamation with the city was indeed an arranged and forced marriage. Their howls of protest were ignored in Wellington, but no sooner was the wedding breakfast over than the post-nuptial fallout began.

Near-anarchy took hold in Hastings within months, when a group of angry farmers announced they were setting up a new, breakaway rural council. They had a typewriter and a tin shed as its headquarters. Things got nasty. The late Jeremy Dwyer, who had been elected mayor of the new Hastings district, received death threats and found himself dragged into the hardest battle of his political career as he tried to hold together the new constituency.

Napier got in too. Its mayor at the time, Alan Dick (now chairman of the Regional Council) and Mr Dwyer had already crossed swords, so few were surprised when Mr Dick opted to help the farmers by supporting their breakaway application to the Local Government Commission. It was perhaps the lowest point ever for Napier-Hastings relationships. The two mayors conducted a bitter and public war of words before the rural revolt was resolved. The breakaway committee had won some exacting concessions for rural ratepayers, including the ring-fencing of urban debt with urban ratepayers.

Neither did things run smoothly on Hastings' other flank. A dark mood of resentment in the cultured circles of Havelock North climaxed in the hiding of the borough's mayoral chains and some oil paintings in a limestone cave in the Te Mata hills for a while, to keep them out of the clutches of heathen Hastings.

Ever the optimist, Mr Dwyer decided in 1999 to test the political winds with a referendum on amalgamation of Hastings District and Napier.

Napier voters rejected it by two votes to one, while Hastings voters favoured it by two votes to one.

Change of Heart

It was against this historical background that the current mayor of Hastings, Lawrence Yule, suddenly announced six months ago that the focus of his fourth mayoral campaign, later this year, would be to advocate the amalgamation of Napier and Hastings.

Only weeks before, as Auckland absorbed the full import of the super-sizing amalgamation to be foisted on it by central government, Mr Yule, also president of Local Government New Zealand, had dismissed the need for any such change in Hawke's Bay. There would be initial savings from efficiencies, he said, but history suggested those would be short-lived because a new council structure would quickly find new ways to spend ratepayers' money.

Mr Yule's apparently abrupt change of heart took everyone by surprise, including Hastings District Councillors, to whom he had breathed not a word before calling a press conference and announcing his amalgamation strategy.

So why did he change tack?

If Hawke's Bay doesn't get its act together, it will be left behind, he says. There is no plot, no plan, just the fact that a simple rationalisation or sharing of council services isn't going to cut the mustard. A far more comprehensive re-organisation is essential if Hawke's Bay is ever to present itself with a unified focus and capitalise on its many assets, he says.

Auckland is set to become a super-city of 1.4 million. It will be a formidable power within local government, with a very loud voice into central government ears. Next up to the blocks will be Wellington region. Waikato, Nelson and Canterbury are already looking at their options to re-organise and up-size their political clout.

The Bigger Picture

■ The old Hawke's Bay County Council stonewalled for years as cramped Hastings City begged it to designate some land for new housing. Eventually, the county selected a large area of stony wasteland out west of the city boundary. The land was a former riverbed. No good

for sheep, cattle or cropping, and therefore useless.

■ The new suburb of Flaxmere -- the home of too much trouble and grief ever since -- was established on what was later discovered to be some of the best red-wine growing land outside Bordeaux.



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Cont. from Pg 5

Let's See the Information

If there really is a good case for amalgamation, it will be obvious in the information that arises from an in-depth study during the next several years, says Mayor Arnott.

"I think people need proper facts rather than emotional stuff, and not giving them the impression that it will save them in their pockets. The conversation should be had, but let's have a decent conversation, with proper information, and see where people get to. At the moment, the information is thin on the ground."

The Napier mayor is in no doubt that, unlike the re-organisation proposal put to referendum in 1999, the Regional Council should be included in any new proposal.

"It has to be part of it. Without it, there is no point in going forward."

In the meantime, Napier is doing its best to promote service sharing – "co-operation is important" – says Mayor Arnott. She, too, cites the example of three completely separate IT systems, and each Council's apparent disinclination to consult the other Councils before buying.

She doesn't dispute that Napier City Council owes itself and others \$57 million, but says it has a long-developed culture of restraint in spending and rates increases. "Over the past 10 years we have had the lowest rate increases

Debt Crime Divide

Debt is often cited as a reason for Napier to fear union with Hastings, but Mr Douglas says both Councils owe roughly the same amount per head of population.

"Napier has been concealing its debt for a long time. They say net debt is \$15m, but it was \$37m in 2009, and will be \$57m this year. They can say that quite lawfully because they fund a lot of that internally from endowment money from land. They lend money to themselves. It's naughty but it's lawful."

On the basis of its 2006 Census population, each Napier resident would owe \$1030 this year. On the same basis, each Hastings resident would owe \$1129.

Mr Yule says Hastings debt is higher than Napier's because it hasn't had the benefit of income from earthquake-produced leasehold land. Despite that, its debt is no higher per head of population than Napier's, and his proposal would ring-fence each city's existing debt with its existing ratepayers.

Crime is another fear factor often thrown into the debate. Does law-abiding city X want to merge with crime-ridden city Y? Latest police statistics show Napier with a higher crime rate than Hastings, although there appears to be little firm ground from which anyone can throw stones.

In 2008/09, Hastings had 1,131 crimes reported per 10,000 head of population. That was up from 1,097 in 07/8, and 1,099 in 06/7. Napier had 1,321 reported crimes per 10,000 head of population in 08/9, up on 1,243 in 07/8, and down on 1,336 in 06/7.

across the board. We're one of the lowest in New Zealand." She doesn't believe "outrageous claims" that a unitary authority could save \$10 million of ratepayers' money each year.

It Ain't Broke

"If it ain't broke don't fix it," says Regional Council chairman Alan Dick.

There's no need for upheaval. There's not a lot of money to be saved. Cooperation is developing and some good things are taking shape. Sure, there's always scope for more sharing of services, such as combined rating, bulk purchasing, or fleet management. But there are fundamental differences that must be protected, and the worry is that if a Council becomes too big, it becomes too remote and cumbersome, he says. "Economies of scale become dis-economies of scale."

Hawke's Bay will benefit from the Regional Council's recent decision to use its significant wealth (\$415m worth of assets including \$111m of property and the \$117m Port of Napier) not simply to grow more wealth, but to help build infrastructure such as the proposed water harvesting dams in Central Hawke's Bay, which

could boost the regional economy by \$300m and year, and create 2000 jobs.

"It can bring significant forces to bear for change at a higher strategic level," Mr Dick says.

"Would a single authority embark on that, or would it build new swimming pools and sports grounds? I think I know what the answer would be."

Neither does he have any confidence that a unitary council would give due weight and funding to the management of natural resources. "There appears to be an indication that unitaries get overwhelmed by territorials' pressures, and some unitaries might not perform their natural resource management functions as well as they should."

No Pressure, But...

The Government has no plans to force amalgamation on Hawke's Bay or anywhere else -- yet. So say Hawke's Bay's two National Party MPs, Chris Tremain and Craig Foss.

The Government's priority is Auckland's re-organisation, "and it is vital that it is implemented correctly." However, once that process is complete, "we expect that the new unified Auckland council will provide many benefits for its residents and ratepayers and will serve as a positive example for other regions to follow", the pair say in a joint statement.

In the meantime, "we would expect that our Councils constantly explore any and all areas where they could co-operate and provide better services, more planning certainty and a reasonable expectation of lower rate increases for Hawke's Bay. We believe there is a general acceptance for the need of a synchronisation and alignment of Councils' priorities and plans so that Hawke's Bay is able to compete as best as possible with competing regions. We do not have a preference over any particular process, as this must be decided locally."

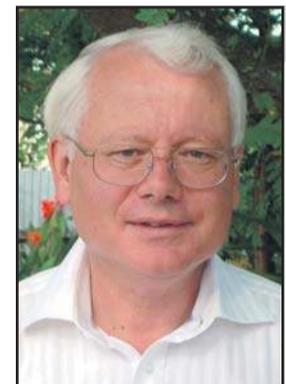
Rodney Hide, as Minister of Local Government, can initiate a reorganisation for any area, but "will not be considering reorganisation proposals for other councils while the reform of Auckland governance is underway."

A Poll is a Waste of Time

Murray Douglas is chief executive of the Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce, and doing his PhD in Australian local government reform. He's highly cynical about prospects for either meaningful service-sharing or full amalgamation in Hawke's Bay.



ALAN DICK:
"There's no need for upheaval. There's not a lot of money to be saved."



MURRAY DOUGLAS:
"The general population are badly informed and go along like sheep."

There is a deeply-embedded culture of resistance to change among the region's political leaders and administrators, he says, and they will do their utmost to protect their own patches.

Service sharing could bring some financial benefits, but amalgamation would be even better, he says.

His own preference would be something like a unitary council with a series of community boards that would be given maximum autonomy. "That would be power to the people." It would achieve "dynamic efficiencies" and give power back to a tired, disillusioned and cynical electorate, he says.

Mr Douglas believes there's more of a mood in Napier these days for political unity, but says he wouldn't assume the same level of support as in 1999 from Hastings voters. "Hastings is more confident these days, and fed up with Napier's reluctance."

However, he says, the issue is all but dead.

"A poll in New Zealand is a waste of time, full stop. The officers are not even thinking about how to do better with shared services, let alone amalgamation, which won't happen if it's left up to voters because council bureaucracies and leadership, who don't want change, will scare them into retaining the status quo. The general population are badly informed and go along like sheep. That's the same the world over. A residential neighbourhood fears whatever is fed into their ears."

The administration of Hawke's Bay needs a rocket under it, Mr Douglas says. "Where is Telecom's office in Hawke's Bay? There isn't one. And big councils don't need to have customer offices. The paradigm of modern local government is that you should be able to pay your rates at the post office, or leave your Hastings library book at the Napier library if you live in Napier. It would be easy, but at the moment it's unlawful."

"If we took a blank sheet of paper and sat down to design a system of local government, surely we wouldn't end up with what we have now," Mr Douglas says.

"Our council sits in a horseshoe with its back to the public. In Portsmouth, Virginia, it's the other way around. And meetings are streamed live. There is a worm device, with which people can instantly indicate agreement or disagreement with what is being said. That is democracy."

Our Governors

- Napier has a mayor and 12 councillors.
- Hastings has a mayor and 14 councillors.
- Wairoa has a mayor and 6 councillors.
- Central Hawke's Bay has a mayor and 8 councillors.
- Hawke's Bay Regional Council has a chairman selected from 9 councillors.
- Five Grand Poobahs and 48 "rank & file" councillors.
- Population of Hawke's Bay: About 148,000.

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'Take A Hiding For Nothing'

By Tom Belford

On 27 February 2008 then-Health Minister David Cunliffe fired the seven freshly elected members of the Hawke's Bay District Health Board and appointed outsider Sir John Anderson as Commissioner to run the DHB.

After months of political and legal jockeying, and a change of Government, new Health Minister Tony Ryall in February 2009 re-instated the elected members, including Kevin Atkinson, who had served as Chair. But Sir John was left in place as Chair.

Did these machinations matter one bit to the quality of health care anyone in Hawke's Bay received over the span of this kerfuffle?

Should we care whether we have an elected Health Board or not?

Elusive Sir John

Preparing this article, I emailed Sir John a few questions, including: In general, do you think it is better for DHBs to be chaired by a suitably qualified elected local, as opposed to an appointed "outsider"? Would it be your wish to serve again as Chair of HBDHB in the new term?

He responded diplomatically: "The question is ... rather who is the most appropriate/experienced person to appoint as chair, following the election of seven members and the appointment of four members to the Board.

"The 21 DHBs currently have a mix of chairs, some of them are appointed board members/some of them are an elected member. The issue for DHBs in rural areas sometimes revolves around having some directors willing to stand for election who have experienced commercial expertise and/or the knowledge of how Government/Ministries operate in the management of the sector. The Ministry/Minister would normally take the skill sets of the elected members into account and seek to fill any skill gaps in considering the appointment of the appointed members."

Other than mentioning that his own term ended in December, he didn't comment on his future intentions.

Sir John's main achievement as DHB Chair has been to hire a new CEO. His other main mandate, bringing the DHB's budget into balance, has failed ... but would have failed regardless of who or how the Board was led over the past two years. The main factors driving escalating health costs in New Zealand are a population that is both older and living longer, absorbing more (and more expensive) health care, and, in our region, poor lifestyle choices with respect to smoking, drinking and diet.

No Board or Chairman's wand could wave these problems away.

Operating at the margins

Consequently, our Hawke's Bay DHB influences health care in our community at the margin ... How do we meet the dialysis needs of patients in Wairoa? Is the Wellesley Road Health Centre the best facility to provide health services in Napier? Should addiction services be provided in this building in Napier, or that one in Hastings? Which piece of expensive medical equipment should we replace first ... or should we air condition the in-patient mental health facility instead? How do we deal with the public rebellion against fluoridation in CHB?

To the patients and communities involved, these are not small, theoretical or

inconsequential questions. But neither are they, taken individually, matters of grand strategy, as opposed to:

If Hawke's Bay's elderly (age 65+) population doubles in the next 35 years, becoming 26% of our community, how will we (the DHB) pay for all those additional in-patient days, the expensive treatments they will expect, the medications and, when we're through, the hospice care?

If 45% of all babies born in Hawke's Bay at this point are Maori, and Maori already have the worst health problems, and we haven't the capacity today to deliver health services effectively to the existing Maori population, how will we (the DHB) ever improve the health profile of this community?

Or, if we (the DHB) have no control over whether junk food is sold in our schools, or over the money paid to primary care providers (GPs) for what purposes or priorities, and patients increasingly wind up at the hospital with preventable conditions, how do we intervene?

You get the picture! Improving the health condition of our region is a pretty challenging job that must be done in a context of scarce resources and limited authority. It's easy to disappoint; nearly impossible to satisfy. As Lawrence Yule commented to me: Health boards can "take a hiding for nothing."

Who would want that job?!

Elected boards

I put that question to Kevin Atkinson, who like other incumbent DHB Board members, as well as new prospects, will be pondering the matter in coming months.

He laughed, then side-stepped into his "take" on the big picture.

And in his view, the big picture is first and foremost about a nasty word: "rationing."

Atkinson notes that overall, New Zealand allocates about 25% of its public budget to health care, comparable to other OECD countries. He thinks that's a reasonable allocation in the face of other competing societal needs, and accepts it as a given.

So long as that politically-sanctioned "cap" is in place, improving and expanding health care will require making do with what we have – achieving greater efficiencies in administration, procurement, and service delivery; emphasizing preventive care and health



education to minimize downstream ill-health and expensive treatment; trying innovative models of care-giving; and centralizing specialist services.

But even assuming all that, given the underlying demographic factors already mentioned, there won't be "enough" health resources to totally satisfy need. For example, home care is now provided to the elderly at a level that can't be sustained as the senior population grows so dramatically in Hawke's Bay. Or, if levels *are* to be sustained, what other needs will be served less?

How does local DHB governance play into this?

Atkinson sees elected local boards taking the difficult responsibility for "developing strategies for rationing the services we are able to provide." And to do that in a manner that the community trusts and accepts, the DHB must be "the eyes and ears" to the community. It's clear that he thinks many of the tough choices must be made locally and in a manner that is responsive to the community. That's the rationale for locally-elected health boards.

To give local DHBs this focus, Atkinson would take some other responsibilities off their plate. He believes there should be a single 50-year health asset management plan for the country. Management of the vast public health asset base and infrastructure – where to build what facilities, what medical technologies and equipment to purchase, etc – as well as the capital funding responsibility for this, should be put in the hands of appropriately experienced senior executives, who would make such decisions on a nation-wide basis, perhaps administered over 3-4 regions.

"Why should several DHBs be struggling with the same question of what radiology

equipment to purchase?" he asks.

Taking these issues off their plate would permit the DHBs to focus on what is more reasonably within their local competence – utilizing the assets to deliver services and devising ways to better provide services in their communities.

[Ed: To that, I would add the local advocacy role of DHBs. If a politically-sensitive local Health Board can't educate other local bodies about health risks in the community – local PM10 air pollution, poor water quality, toxic contaminated sites – and press them to do something about it, then who *is* to play that role?]

Giving local DHBs a job they can actually do, in a manner that provides local political accountability, is not merely an academic subject.

Recently in *Management* magazine, Health Minister Ryall commented:

"Good governance is critical to our DHBs. But they are very complex and very large businesses ... What we have in DHB governance at the moment is very committed people who are sometimes too narrowly focused on their own experiences or [the interests of] their professional colleagues. There is a clear lack of complex business experience on many of the boards."

Minister Ryall emphasizes that DHBs – with huge budgets and life-affecting responsibilities – are seriously more demanding environments than can be managed by "hobby" directors.

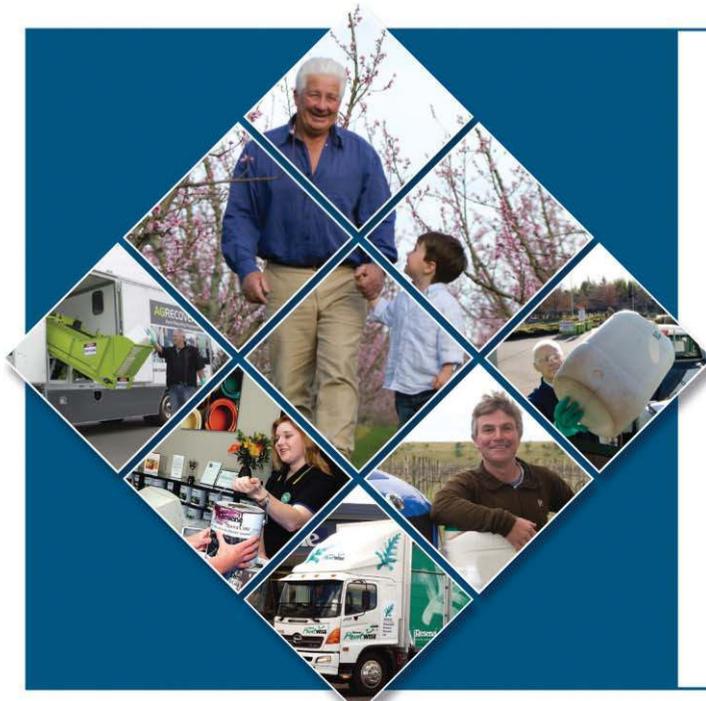
For now, the Minister seems content to push DHB Boards to "raise the bar". But, as the Government has shown in another context – firing the entire regional council in Canterbury! – it might not be shy about questioning the very utility of elected DHBs at some point ... perhaps in a second term.

Back in Hawke's Bay

We are left pondering the fate of our own elected Board. Who will stand for the tough job of DHB board member?

To a very important degree, this depends on what role the Health Minister has in mind for elected versus appointed board members? In DHBs the Chair appears to be in total command. That is certainly true in the case of HBDHB and Chairman Anderson. He dictates the style and substance of what goes on, full stop. The re-instated elected Board members have marked time since their rebirth.

Cont. pn Pg 8



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Sunset For Regional Council?

By Tom Belford

Last month in **BayBuzz Digest**, Chairman Alan Dick wrote about this year's agenda for the Regional Council. But much of what he said sounded more like a worried defense of the very role of regional councils in today's political and issue context.

Since he wrote, the ultimate warning shot was fired across the bow of all of New Zealand's regional councils – the Government fired outright the elected councillors of Environment Canterbury! The principal reason given was the council's failure to address water management issues.

Flashback to Labour's dumping of Hawke's Bay's elected DHB two years ago!

What the Canterbury episode demonstrates is that National – just like Labour – has no special commitment to local democracy in New Zealand. It's all about outcomes. If the Government is unhappy with outcomes – and in Canterbury the Government wants more irrigation, if one listens to Prime Minister Key – its Ministers will not hesitate to step in and rearrange the local deck chairs. And don't forget ... there's a "review" of the entire Local Government Act underway.

Even the Hawke's Bay Regional Council's fiercest critics haven't (yet) called for its abolition by Government fiat. That said, a variety of forces are at work that threaten – or promise, depending on one's perspective – to significantly alter the role of our Regional Council.

First is Mayor Yule's call for amalgamation, an initiative Chairman Dick shows little enthusiasm for, as you see in Kathy Webb's report in this edition. In Yule's formulation, hastily contrived from the Auckland plan, Hawke's Bay would be governed by a unitary authority, like Nelson/Marlborough and Gisborne.

Needless to say, HBRC is busily gathering information to make the case that unitary authorities don't do a noticeably better job ... particularly in terms of protecting the environment. Of course, making that defense

would require the Regional Council to establish that it *is* in fact protecting our environment!

At the same time as it looks for flaws in other unitary governance examples, the Regional Council appears to be trying to show lately that it has "gotten the message" with respect to environmental issues in Hawke's Bay. For example, HBRC would assert it is moving more vigorously to penalize renegade water users, address dairy farm pollution affecting the Taharua/Mohaka Rivers, help CHB get its sewage out of the Tukituki, and prevent Hastings from dumping its stormwater into sensitive ecological environments for another 25 years.

Voters in October will judge whether the current HBRC is doing too little, too late. And subsequently, if Mayor Yule gets his way, voters will then get an opportunity to decide whether *any* Regional Council is really needed.

Meantime, perhaps heeding National's warning that it wants more irrigation in NZ, the Regional Council has embarked on a multi-million dollar "feasibility study" looking at potential damming of the Tukutuki to provide water for more intensive farming in CHB (and is looking at similar options for the Ngaruroro). A responsible option to consider.

However, perhaps wary of Government and a bit too eagerly, Chairman Dick already speaks of this initiative as if it were a done deal. What is postured as a "feasibility study" is actually simply pre-planning for the damming. This is not the ideal way to convince environmentalists that the HBRC is a born-again environmental agency!

If HBRC avoids death by amalgamation, it still (like all regional councils) faces the threat of "death by a thousand cuts."

In a number of critical policy areas, the National Government appears to be on a course of adopting considerably more prescriptive nationwide policies with respect to environmental protection. Areas like freshwater quality, on-site

wastewater treatment, soil contamination and coastal management are likely to be affected, In such areas, for better or worse, the discretion now allowed regional councils in managing such matters, or setting their own standards, would be sharply curtailed.

And in this respect, the big elephant in the room is the yet un-determined scope of authority of National's new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is still being fashioned via Environment Minister Smith's "phase two" review of the Resource Management Act. HBRC's worst nightmare would be that the firing of Environment Canterbury is a mere precursor to Government deciding that regional councils aren't that essential after all, particularly once critical policy-making discretion has been stripped from them through a series of a National Environmental Standards and Policy Statements.

The final card to be played affecting the role and authority of our HB Regional Council will also be dealt by the National-led Government, acting for the Crown.

This involves any Maori "co-management" or "co-governance" role established as part of Treaty of Waitangi settlements for Hawke's Bay, now in negotiation between the Crown

and pertinent Maori Treaty groups. The most advanced negotiation in HB – and likely precedent-setting beyond – is with Ngati Pahauwera. HBRC has sought to participate in these negotiations, which will re-shape natural resource management throughout the Bay. HBRC hopes to fashion a continuing role for itself as the democratically-elected voice of the entire region. But the bottomline is that the ultimate structure will be determined by the Crown and Maori representatives.

The best un-kept secret amongst our local politicians is that under consideration is a Regional Plan Committee where six elected HBRC councillors and six members appointed by Maori would set resource policy and management in the region. Some iwi have expressed support for this model, as has the Minister of Treaty Settlements, but announcements regarding any decisions have been repeatedly delayed.

All in all, given these various dynamics, none of which point to an enhanced role, the Regional Council appears to have considerable work cut out for it if it wishes to emerge with a strong identity and *raison d'être* intact. It's time for the HB Regional Council to figure out who its constituency really is.

'Take A Hiding For Nothing'

Cont. from Pg 7

But it's difficult to see why these busy community leaders would choose to spend three more years passively saluting Sir John when they could make far more significant personal contributions elsewhere. And certainly if you have formerly been an activist and inclusive chairman like Kevin Atkinson, I would imagine it's even more difficult to see much opportunity for service in that environment. For any of these people, or others with an interest in the region's health care, why even bother running for a seat in that closed shop.

So, will Kevin Atkinson run? No decision yet. But he would get at least two votes. I asked previous defenders of Atkinson and the elected Board, Mayors Yule and Arnott, to comment on the situation. Said Arnott: "I support a locally elected Board ... it is now time for thoughtful democracy, clear voices and strong action."

The community supported the elected Board through the hardest times and I would support them again for all the same reasons. As for Atkinson, "I'd be very happy to see him as chair."

Said Yule: "Kevin Atkinson offers outstanding value to the community, and he's highly respected by the community. I would like to see him run for the Health Board and I would like to see him appointed as chairman."

But referring to fact that the Health Minister

appoints the chair, and not necessarily from the elected members, Yule continues: "That said, no one knows how the Government is going to handle these situations" ... a comment echoed by Arnott.

It's fair to call the question of Minister Ryall: You say you want the bar raised.

Then you should empower our elected Board members and choose a Chair from among them. Is that the plan you have for Hawke's Bay and, if so, when will you signal it so that would-be candidates can make intelligent decisions about seeking office?

MPs Tremain and Foss graciously put that question to Minister Ryall for BayBuzz. Replied the Minister in a statement: "The HBDHB will return to normal elections this year and will be no different to any other DHB around the country. In addition to the elected members the Minister will appoint four members to the Board."

The Minister will then appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair. This is no different to any other DHB in the country."

As you can see, there's no preference for choosing the Chair from the elected members indicated in those comments, leaving the fate of the Chairman twisting in the wind. Minister Ryall is keeping his treatment options open!

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Hastings For Sale!

Cont. from Pg 1

One might wonder if Higgins only offered a \$100,000 contribution, would that have been enough to secure the contract? Or conversely, maybe the Trust Chairman/Mayor should have struck a tougher deal, asking Higgins – or some other contractor – for \$750,000!

Who does a potential vendor think they are negotiating with anyway ... Trust Chairman Yule or Mayor Yule? Isn't this role confusion itself problematic ... at least sending an undesirable signal to those who hope to do business with the Council or the Trust?

Trust Chair/Mayor Yule argues that the Trust/Council understands enough about roading costs to know that the amount proposed by Higgins to do the work was fair.

And the \$500,000 contribution was a nice bonus to the community.

Says Mayor Yule: "This is a win win sponsorship. Higgins will provide a very competitive price (tested against well known current pricing) and the Regional Sports Park has benefited from \$500k from non ratepayer sources."

But maybe another contractor would have offered a bigger bonus for the same favor.

The whole affair puts the Council on a slippery slope. One might think that, by now, Council knows the "fair" price of everything and every service it procures. Why bother with competitive tenders at all?

To avoid future situations like this, Councillor Bradshaw recently attempted to pass a resolution simply requiring the Sports Trust (and other HDC funded organisations) to conduct its contracting and procurement according to the same groundrules as the Council itself.

Those rules require contracts valued at over \$50,000 to go to competitive public tender.

But this proposal horrified Councillors Bowers and Speers, who led the opposition to this "bureaucratic" approach.

Mayor Yule, speaking in his capacity as Trust Chairman, indicated the Trust would probably have a problem with being required to follow the Council's rules. Bradshaw's resolution failed.

Says Councillor Bradshaw: "Competitive tendering is the cornerstone to getting best value for the ratepayers and as such should

have been one of the first conditions in the agreement for HDC to fund the RSP Trust.

What is required is one consistent rule for all organisations being funded by the HDC. It was a shame that myself and only three of my fellow Councillors agreed."

Meanwhile, the ever-vigilant *HB Today* gave one paragraph to the matter, basically writing it off as petty politics, saying: "HBT understands the shots fired at Mr Yule could be from groups looking to discredit and challenge [Mayor Yule] before ratepayers go to the voting booth on October 9."

That completely misses the issue. Concern runs far beyond some possible candidates. In a poll BayBuzz is currently running online, 83% of respondents say this transaction is wrong. As one ratepayer commented:

"It sends all the wrong messages to external suppliers and it stinks.

"Principles must be upheld to avoid the moral hazards that inevitably develop when due process is let slip.

"This is damaging to relationships with other contractors who are collectively the supply "market" and they may now shun the contract process, with good reason, because it is rigged.

"What was the rush? Why couldn't Higgins have made their stunning offer within the tender process?"

Which raises two simple questions for Mayor Yule and his cadre of "let's make a deal" Councillors:

- 1) Should we expect more deals like this – trading Council contracts for "donations" – as you attempt to raise funds for the sports park?
- 2) Does Council intend to limit this practice to the sports park, or are all Hastings contracts open to "donations"?

It's only fair that all would-be contractors and vendors (and ratepayers) know what the new groundrules are.

What do you think? Should principle or pragmatism have prevailed here? And what about going forward?

For example, if a multi-million dollar velodrome is to be built, should would-be vendors have the expectation that, with a bit of a bonus contribution, they can avoid competitive tendering?

You can express your opinion by taking our quick BayBuzz poll online.

Just go to www.baybuzz.co.nz and look for the "Higgins Poll" link on the homepage.

Tim Gilbertson
Columnist



Beware Of The Sacker

In John Le Carré's classic novel, *The Spy Who Came in From The Cold*, the Hero is asked what he really believes. He replies "I believe a Number 11 Bus will take me to Clapham. I don't believe Father Christmas will be driving it."

Well, that's a great line. I like it.

That always seemed to me to be an apt summary of the state of the modern world. We're doing okay but don't expect any icing on the cake.

The Government's sacking of the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury) fits the bill exactly. The CRC certainly had its share of problems, most of which were probably personality driven.

Behind the scenes of every political drama or crisis, stands a man wiping the blood off the knife and trying to wipe the smile off his face.

The problem with the whole sorry mess is that the people who did the sacking are hardly paragons of integrity themselves.

As we learned in Hawke's Bay a year or two ago when our own DHB was sacked to cover up the illegal behaviour of amongst others, a cabinet minister's husband, there is more to it than meets the eye.

The major issue is exactly the same as that which we faced in Hawke's Bay.

Matters should be very serious indeed before a democratically elected body is dismissed.

In the case of the DHB the sacking

of the board was an absolute scandal, and it remains an indelible stain on the integrity and reputation of the elected representatives of the province that the criminals were allowed to get away with it.

In the case of the CRC the question is whether or not the Council was competent or incompetent and herein lies the problem.

The people who sacked them are running a deficit of \$450 million dollars a week.

This is sentencing you and I and our children's children to a life of debt and relative poverty.

There can be no doubt that the Key government is financially incompetent. This is nothing new.

From Muldoon to Clarke, we have never had a government that has done anything but borrow and hope.

New Zealand is the wealthiest country in the world before tax. After tax we are relatively one of the poorest.

Government now spends over 45% of GDP. That is the best way to kill an economy without actually becoming a colony of North Korea or Zimbabwe.

The people doing the sacking are no better and are in many ways worse than those they have dismissed.

So the question of sacking democratically elected boards comes back to John Le Carré. Our democracy is a creaking old bus that takes us more or less where most of us want to go most of the time.

It is just a shame the bus is being driven by self-serving donkeys.



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Roy Dunningham
Columnist



Creative Hawke's Bay Invitational

Hastings City Art Gallery – April 10-June 27 2010

It has taken awhile, but Creative Hawke's Bay has got the formula right for this year's *Invitationals* exhibition.

The old *Hawke's Bay Review* had been in decline and was replaced by the *Invitationals* which revived standards and artist participation. A stand-down policy provided opportunities for fresh talent to emerge. It worked well but one problem remained. Last year one or two artists were less than rigorous in monitoring the qualities of the work they submitted. To address this a selector has been engaged this year in the person of curator Tim Walker.

Selecting in art can be problematic but, done well, it gives an exhibition form and a point of view. In the past this had been highlighted by the fascinating "Salon des Refusés" of work rejected from the old *Hawke's Bay Reviews* held at Wine Country Gallery in Havelock North. Certainly, the resulting *Invitationals* show this year is one of the most consistent in quality that I can recall.

It was especially heartening to see so much good painting.

The talented Paula Taaffe has sometimes made things difficult for herself with abrupt shifts in style, but she has got everything together in these latest works. With judicious use of masking and gestural sweeps of paint she has packed her pictures with orbs and amoebic shapes which fight for space, generating much tension and excitement.

By contrast, Desmond Helmore uses flat planes and reduced perspective reminiscent of Japanese woodcuts to achieve a sense of space that belies the modest dimensions of the pictures. His beautifully weighted colours and slightly surreal content enhances the Zen-like calm of these finely resolved works.

"Cul de Sac" by Wellesley Binding looks at Havelock North at night-time. But this is not the Havelock North of real estate brochures. This is a disquieting vision where house lights glint like campfires, feebly seeking security

against the enveloping darkness of existence, a transitional world where people are only passing through. It may not be re-assuring but it is superb painting.

The most original work in the exhibition is from Matt Couper. He employs quasi-mystical texts and symbols taken from a range of religious and philosophical orders over the ages. The symbols were of doubtful effectiveness in their original context, but they can tell us a lot about the way the human mind deals with hopes and fears and tries to explain the inexplicable. The presentation of these ideas is wonderfully pungent, painterly and idiosyncratic.

I have been known to say that I would vomit if I saw another Hawke's Bay painting with wine glasses and bottles. Well, Helen Kerridge has done one and it is brilliant. A sly comment on art and marketing it is, as always, a great composition and very well painted.

Chris Bryant's "taku tapuwae – aue" comprises a pou figure painted on to a weatherboard house corner, speaking of the past and present habitation of the land. The support is modern but the painting would appear to be an acknowledgement of the 19th Century painted houses of the East Coast.

Jacob Scott also combines old and new. His traditional figure shown as a "Hari hari (dancer)" re-incarnates into the 21st Century brashness of transparent, coloured perspex.

It is always a pleasure to see the drawings of Michael Hawksworth. These works show a zoöomorphic mix of stones, containers, fabric and obscure anatomical parts which evolve into their own life form. It is lovely design and exquisite use of media. The organic theme was favoured by some of the sculptors too. Linda Bruce shows a cluster of finely crafted ceramic containers which have morphed from body parts, seed pods, flowers and fabric. The title "quivivinemoneae" seems, like the work, to carry fragments of references for our imagination to dwell on.



Recession by Desmond Helmore.



Quidditas Rz38 (detail) by Paula Taaffe.

Peter Baker bridges sculpture and graphic art with his curved space depictions of human drama, presented with classical formality and restraint.

Restraint is also shown in the seductive greywacke "Onewa" or tears of Ema Scott. Less restrained, perhaps, are the "Mnemes" from the artist known as Miss Creant. Her shoal of wickedly sperm-like creatures appears to be rushing headlong towards the fulfillment of their destiny.

David Trubridge exemplifies the idea that art and functionalism need not be separated. The idea is not new (look at the old Maori canoe bailer in the Hawke's Bay Museum), but was often lost in the post World War II obsession with design by accountancy. His designs are



Taku Tapuwae Aue My Eco Footprint by Chris Bryant.

inspiring in their grace and integrity.

There are too many good things in this show to cover in this review. Go and see it for yourself.

Selector Tim Walker has given us an exhibition that truly looks at Hawke's Bay in its many aspects. This is not the "colourful at all costs" Hawke's Bay of tourist promotions but is darker and deeper. And a lot more interesting.

Cameras Rolling

With support from Venture Hawke's Bay, Film Hawke's Bay has debuted.

Starting modestly with an office at VHB and a website (www.hawkesbaynz.com/film), Film HB will promote Hawke's Bay as a destination for film, television and commercial productions, and to facilitate the production needs of crews filming or taping in the Bay. Productions can range from a Bollywood film to a segment for Australian TV to a high budget American TV commercial.

The economic benefit of bringing a production to Hawke's Bay can be substantial. For example, a German TV production recently came to town for about a week. A project like that might typically involve a crew of 40-50 for five days. Spending on accommodation, catering, vehicle hire and location fees might amount to roughly \$60,000, not taking into account "extras" like security, special equipment hire, entertainment,

costumes & make-up and props.

That's a bit more than Grandpa and his caravan!

Of course the bigger indirect value can be the positive image of Hawke's Bay projected through the films and programs that are viewed by millions, more often than not abroad. Free promotion that can stimulate ever more interest in the Bay as a place to visit, work and live.

Given these benefits, the competition is hot to attract productions. Auckland, Wellington and other regions in New Zealand already have film offices, most larger in scale. Hawke's Bay must fight for its share ... and this marketing is best placed in experienced hands.

Currently, Film HB is managed by production pros Tessa Tylee, Mirabel Brook and Gilly Lawrence, each devoting a bit of their time.

Cont. on Pg 11

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Cont. from Pg 10

Mirabel worked for years in television in England for the BBC and as an independent production manager. Many of the documentary and drama/documentary productions she worked on involved extensive location travel.

Tessa for the past fifteen years has been a television director and producer based largely in Auckland.

Lifestyle series and documentaries have been her specialist field, as well as covering a few corporate videos since moving to Hawke's Bay. Gilly has long worked in film production as a gaffer – lighting. Getting Film HB up and running has been a passion of his.

Pros like Tessa, Mirabel and Gilly are well-positioned to “sell” the region to other pros in the business. As creatives themselves, they speak the same language as their “customers.”

They can anticipate the locations that will best serve the visual and technical needs of a production, as well as the logistical challenges that must be met. As Mirabel puts it, “We know the sun will be right at that location in the late afternoon.”

They operate with the same urgency as hyper-active production crews and can facilitate the permitting and cooperation needed from local councils (mediating a certain amount of culture shock on both sides).

From the standpoint of an outside filmmaker or TV producer who must be able to concentrate on their creative product and optimize their expensive location shooting days, Film Hawke's Bay offers the peace of mind of “one stop shopping” – from where to hire a cherry picker to where's the best bar in town!

Playing their parts, Hastings, Napier and Wairoa Councils have made their jurisdictions officially “film friendly”, signifying that they will help facilitate film/TV productions, for example, by streamlining local permitting requirements (to use public spaces, close roads, make noise, etc).

And Film Hawke's Bay will be incorporated in Film New Zealand's extensive marketing program and materials, providing international exposure.

Tessa, Mirabel and Gilly must now to build out their presence. That includes an online database listing the HB vendors who can provide typically-required services to producers, and creating a photo/video library of HB locations to promote the Bay as a shooting paradise.

However, this will require resources beyond the seed money and office support furnished so far by VHB. Going forward, the core budget of a part-time staffed Film Hawke's Bay is in the \$70k per year range. These funds must still be raised.

Once World Cup Rugby arrives, all sorts of television crews will be wandering around the Bay, following the teams and producing the “local colour” features that will bring Hawke's Bay to life for foreign audiences.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that the Bay hopes to leverage for long-term benefit in terms of future tourism. Hopefully our Council and business leaders will see the huge value to be gained by having Film Hawke's Bay on the scene ... and well-resourced.

Brendan Webb Columnist



Tightening The Noose

I spend much of my day under a form of house arrest.

I cannot leave the house without being closely watched and followed. I am escorted to the shed and back. At night, unseen eyes monitor my movements from beyond the pool of light from the security lights. I have been stopped and searched while taking food scraps to the compost bin.

The all-seeing eyes belong to my foster son McIntyre, a short-legged but long-tailed Jack Russell with a dark past. He came to us under a cloud of suspicion -- some would say compelling evidence -- that he was responsible for the deaths of chooks on our friends' farm just north of Wairoa.

The legal fraternity would offer the opinion, along with a hefty invoice, that finding him beaming amid the feathery carnage would persuade most juries of his guilt. Mind you, a jury of his peers, namely 12 Jack Russells from good rural stock, would throw the case out.

Not only were the chooks not in an OSH-approved enclosure, not wearing high-viz jackets and not wearing safety boots, but a small dog with only passable eyesight could hardly be expected to differentiate between chooks and turkeys, the latter being popular hunting game on the farm.

If that line of argument did not have 12 canine heads nodding in agreement, their open jaws salivating in unison, then I would adopt rugby commentator Murray Mexted's advice and go on offensive defence. I would attack the dubious character of the only witness to the alleged attack, a man with French blood in his veins.

We of Anglo-Saxon stock have always harboured a deep suspicion of the French. They invaded our home country, let everyone else invade theirs, make good cooks but bad cars, smoke too much and smell of onions.

Now the word of a semi-Frenchman, a Dreyfus-like cry of “J'Accuse!” has condemned my poor little dog as Wairoa's worst serial killer, at least in the free-range poultry category. Having being plucked from Death Row and now facing a life of home detention with us, McIntyre has tried to turn his life around. He has become a useful member of society, ridding our parks of old dried chicken bones and the occasional discarded burger.

Once free to roam hills and valleys, McIntyre's paddocks have been reduced to a backyard, although daily supervised walks on riverbanks and trips to a block of land we are trying to beat into submission, give some relief from his urban confinement.

He had a brush with the law when found trudging along the main highway north of Napier on his solo way to Hastings in the belief he'd been left behind at the block. An overnight stay in the Bay View police station, a bag of biscuits and a delivery trip home in a patrol car were all enthusiastically accepted. A large chocolate cake delivered to his uniformed rescuers ensured the matter went no further.



McIntyre ... convicted by circumstantial evidence.

The only road McIntyre had ever walked along previously was a quiet shingle one in a valley. Now we dodge rush-hour traffic and drivers who make us wait 10 minutes to cross a street. But he learned to stand at the edge of a busy intersection and not move until he heard the pedestrian buzzer, trotting across in front of amused motorists.

A hunter by instinct, confronter of possums and rats, able to vanish out of sight down rabbit holes, he is also the most gentle animal with children and people of all ages. He can reduce swaggering Mongrel Mob prospects to smiles when he trots up for a pat.

But his life has changed again.

In December the Hastings District Council passed new dog control laws to stop children and anyone else being summarily mauled by dogs every time they step out their door. They require dogs to be on leads in all public places, except a few designated areas scattered around the district.

We made a submission against the bylaw at the time but knew it was futile.

So McIntyre's morning walks, once a happy release of urine and pent-up energy, are now spent trudging along at the end of a lead. Morning walks now are like living in occupied France. Every ute or van with a council logo could be an informer.

The new bylaw also requires owners to pick up their dog's droppings. Fair enough. But the flaw in the whole scheme is that there is nowhere to dispose of the bag and its contents. Do they really expect people to happily carry a fresh batch of warm dog droppings around until they get back home?

McIntyre now spends much of his day waiting for the late-afternoon trip in the back of the ute to officially dog-designated zones like riverbanks and the Pakowhai Country Park on the outskirts of Hastings. There are plenty of trees to pee on at the park, a river to cool off in and lots of dog backsides to sniff.

In fact there is only one thing missing from this canine utopia --- bins for dog droppings. So the old concrete Pakowhai bridge, part of the Hawke's Bay walking track complete with a small brass plaque, is always a minefield of dog droppings. It's not a good look.

The council put out a press release saying it had been heartened by the fact that out of 208 dogs seen with their owners in public since the bylaw was introduced, 178 were on leads.

Flushed with its own success at bringing most dogs and their owners into line, the council will impose an instant fine of \$300 for owners whose dogs are not on leads.

In which case there should be plenty of money for those bins they forgot to provide in their bylaw.

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The screenshot shows the BayBuzz website layout. At the top is the BayBuzz logo with the tagline 'Bee in the know' and a TREMAINS advertisement. Below is a navigation menu with links for HOME, BLOG, ISSUES, DIGEST, ELECTION 2010, ADVERTISE, TAKE ACTION, and ABOUT. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features a 'Todays Article' section with a featured article 'Cranford Meltdown'. Below this is a 'Latest Articles' grid with several article teasers. On the right side, there are call-to-action buttons for 'Subscribe for FREE updates', 'Donate today', and 'Advertise with BayBuzz'. Further down is an advertisement for '3R Group Ltd' and a 'Posts' list. The bottom section includes 'BayBuzz Digest', 'Take Action' (with a poll and survey), 'Bay News', 'Election 2010', and 'Have a Whinge'. At the very bottom is a footer with logos for PAREHUA, MARY DOYLE, fruitbowl, waimaramaori, and COTTAGES.

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