

Friday 14th August 2020

Open Letter to Rex Graham (Chair, HBRC) and Alex Walker (Mayor, CHBDC)

This letter is to inform you that we have resigned from the Tukituki Leaders' Forum.

The purpose of the Tukituki Leaders Forum (TTLF) was:

"To create a unified approach to enhancing the mauri of the river by improving water quality and security through proactive land and water management in the Tukituki catchment"

Unfortunately, this goal has been frustrated by the forum's mandate being changed, the conduct of some forum members, along with the recent decision by Central Hawkes Bay District Council (CHBDC) to grant Water Holdings Hawkes Bay (WHHB) \$58,000 to maintain the consents for the Ruataniwha dam.

WHHB are a key stakeholder in the TTLF, as highlighted several times during CHBDC's discussion preceding the grant of \$58,000. The Chair of WHHB, in his letter of request to CHBDC, states:

"Counsel (sic) will be aware of all the constructive work behind the scenes, particularly in the Tukituki Forum to help find a solution and that these consents form one of the options being considered for water security in CHB".

It is concerning that members of the TTLF who have a direct financial interest in one of the water storage options failed to declare a conflict of interest and continued to take part in the decision-making process. A further conflict arises with the CHBDC Mayor participating in the TTLF, and in her capacity overseeing the vote to grant WHHB \$58,000.

Additional questions arise as to the composition of the TTLF, which was formed by invitation of the Chair of the Hawke's Bay Regional Council and Mayor of CHBDC. Given recent events, the membership of the TTLF gives the distinct impression that it was formed with a predetermined outcome in mind. It certainly cannot be considered as representative of the wider CHB community.

Procedural concerns also arise. Meetings of the TTLF have been held in private, with no minutes kept, or public statements released. The decision-making process is presented as being a commercial secret. This lack of transparency, once it becomes apparent to the CHB ratepayer community, will undermine public confidence in any outcomes from the TTLF.

These are the main reasons for our decision to tender our joint resignations. In short, we no longer have confidence in the forum's composition or processes, and do not wish to be aligned with its outcomes

It is unfortunate that such an important issue facing our district has been dealt with in such a shoddy way. However, we also believe that a new group that is truly representative of the CHB community, and with a clear mandate that aligns with the original mandate of the TTLF, would offer a positive way forward, and remain willing to discuss this prospect.

Yours faithfully

Clint Deckard, Louise Phillips.

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