

24 June 2026

Governance and Administration Committee
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Teenaa koutou katoa,

Submission from Waikato District Council on Better Regional Boundaries Bill

Introduction

Waikato District Council (Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the proposed Better Regional Boundaries Bill.

Council supports the reorganisation of central government agencies boundaries to align with those of local authorities. The Bill represents a positive step toward more coordinated, cohesive, and effective engagement between local and central government and aligns with Government's broader programme of local government reform.

Aligned boundaries will support improved planning, funding, and service delivery, while strengthening partnerships between agencies and reducing complexity for communities. This will enable more integrated delivery, more efficient public investment, and better outcomes at the local level.

Current boundary arrangements create confusion and operational challenges for communities across the Waikato District, particularly where multiple agency jurisdictions overlap a single local government district. These challenges are further exacerbated during emergency response and civil defence situations, where timely response is critical and misaligned boundaries can affect how quickly communities receive essential services.

Legacy issues following the Auckland amalgamation are evident across a number of services. Policing responsibilities span multiple agency boundaries, fire and emergency response jurisdictions can be determined by centreline road boundaries rather than proximity, and health service catchments do not always align with natural communities or the nearest point of care. Together, these misalignments create inefficiencies and barriers to accessing services.

Council notes that local government is currently undergoing significant reform, including the Simplifying Local Government programme and Resource Management reform. These reforms are expected to result in new unitary arrangements, subject to cabinet decisions, ahead of the 2028 local government elections. Council therefore recommends that any central government boundary changes align with the final outcomes of these reforms.

Implementation Considerations

Council considers that implementation of boundary realignment should be deferred until local government reform decisions are finalised and new unitary model boundaries are confirmed. This will avoid unnecessary duplication, reduced disruption, and ensure changes are implemented once.

The proposed five-year transition period provides a practical timeframe for central government agencies to progressively align their boundaries. However, Council recommends that alignment with the forthcoming Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport occurs earlier. This would better support integration and delivery of Regional Spatial Plans, including transport components, and enable alignment with wider local government reform priorities.

While implementation will be led by central government agencies, clear communication of transition arrangements to local authorities and communities will be critical. Transition impacts should be carefully managed to maintain continuity of service and confidence in public services.

Conclusion

Council supports the Better Regional Boundaries Bill and its focus on creating more fit-for-purpose boundary arrangements. Greater alignment of boundaries would support a more coherent system, improve coordination across agencies, and enable more efficient, integrated, and community focused service delivery and responsiveness. Council recommends that any boundary changes for central government services align with the boundaries of the unitary councils that are yet to be formed under the current Simplifying Local Government reform programme.

Further information

Should the Governance and Administration Committee require clarification on the submission or any additional information, contact Maggie Ford, email maggie.ford@waikatodc.govt.nz.

Ngaa mihi,



Aksel Bech
Mayor

Council Approval and Reference

This submission was approved by the Mayor and Chairs Submission Forum on [24 June 2026]