

From: Kylie Cornelius

Sent: Friday, 2 October 2026 3:25 pm

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Subject: Keep Community Advisors local and relational - Marlborough Chamber of Commerce

Tēnā koutou

I am writing on behalf of the Marlborough Chamber of Commerce, representing approximately 330 businesses and community organisations across Marlborough, regarding the proposed restructure of Community Operations, Hāpai Hapori.

We are concerned about the impact this proposal could have on our rural and regional communities, particularly if Community Advisor roles are removed from Te Tauihu and centralised into regional hubs in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

This is not simply about where someone sits. It is about how communities are supported.

Our local Community Advisors bring knowledge of our communities, relationships built over time and an understanding of the people and organisations they work with. They turn up to hui, help new groups find their feet, connect people with other funding opportunities and understand the challenges facing our communities. That local, face-to-face support cannot be replicated through an online system or a centralised service.

We are also concerned about the risk that Community Advisor roles become increasingly focused on processing funding applications, rather than supporting community development more broadly. If that happens, smaller, rural, Māori, ethnic and emerging community groups may be disadvantaged, particularly where they do not have the resources or experience to compete with organisations that can put together highly polished funding applications.

As a Chamber, we strongly support the principle of locals supporting locals. This applies just as much to community infrastructure and capability as it does to our local business community. People living and working in our regions understand their communities in a way that is difficult to replicate from a centralised hub.

We ask that the Department:

- Pause the proposed restructure and engage directly with the communities that will be affected before any final decisions are made.
- Retain Community Advisor roles in Te Taihū and other regional and rural communities across Aotearoa.
- Protect the relational and community development aspects of the role, rather than reducing it primarily to funding administration.
- Assess and publish the potential impacts of the proposed changes on regional, rural, Māori, ethnic and emerging community groups before any final decision is made.

We urge the Department and Ministers to consider what could be lost by removing these roles from the communities they serve, not just the efficiencies that may be gained through centralisation.

Ngā mihi

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