# Minutes

## Taranaki Local Advisory Committee Meeting

**Date:** 2 October 2025 **Time:** 10.00 am – 2.45pm

**Venue:** Taranaki Veterinary Centre, 32 Albion Street, Hawera 4610

**Present:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sam Bennett | LAC Chair |
| Stephen Hopkinson | LAC Deputy Chair |
| Tracy Abel | LAC Member |
| Neil Holdom | LAC Member |
| Daniel Fleming | LAC Member |
| Alisha Stone | LAC Member |
| Callum Williamson | LAC Member |

**In Attendance:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Amit Prasad (online 2-2.30) | Fire and Emergency NZ – Board Member |
| David Utumapu | Acting Region Manager, Te Ūpoko |
| Ian Wright | Acting District Manager, Taranaki |
| Christine McGinty | Community Risk Manager – Te Ūpoko |
| Aiden Crawford | Pou Takawaenga – Te Ūpoko |
| Michelle Bartlett (online) | Senior Advisor, Local Advisory Committees |

**Apologies:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bruce Stubbs | Region Manager, Te Ūpoko |
| Brendan Rei | LAC Member |

### In-Committee time

The meeting started with committee only time.

### Welcome

The meeting was opened with a karakia from the Pou Takawaenga, followed by a welcome from the Chair and introductions from new District staff.

### Committee operations

No updates to the Register of Interests were noted. This will be one LAC member's final meeting prior to his resignation taking effect on 3 November 2025. The minutes were confirmed for the previous meeting on 5 June 2025 and actions updated.

### Chairs Update

In July, the Chair attended the LAC Chairs Hui in Wellington, this provided an opportunity to meet other Chairs from around the country, listen to the kōrero and learn where each LAC has landed.

Each LAC has different risk profiles and as a result the individual Insight reports raised different issues with some similarities. The Chairs also worked together on the combined LAC Chair's Insights report.

This report has now gone to the Board, and LACs are awaiting the response. The LAC are keen to see some actions and outcomes from Fire and Emergency. The next LAC Chairs' Forum with the Board is 5 November 2025.

*Firefighter Water Supplies Code of Practice* – This is going through consultation and Fire and Emergency has requested one nominee from each LAC; Taranaki's LAC representative was confirmed The code of practice is around standardising water supplies that properties need to hold on site.

**Confirmation of Engagement plan for 2025-26**

The LAC acknowledged a need to increase their visibility especially with communities where they are targeting their engagement. The LAC raised concern about their preparedness to respond to community questions and the importance of receiving meaningful feedback from Fire and Emergency and the Board to demonstrate value of engagement. The District staff clarified that LAC insights flow at two levels: strategic/long-term insights to Board (longer implementation timeframes expected), and local/operational insights into District teams (shorter to medium-term change). The District team are also available to support with community questions.

Priority engagement areas identified:

- Migrant communities
- Continued volunteer brigade engagement
- Groups linked to local fire fatalities

The LAC Stakeholder Engagement plan was updated to reflect these priority areas.

**Engagement Reports and Analysis**

LAC engagement reports were discussed; recent engagements have been with local volunteer brigades. Two LAC members presented a combined analysis from engagements with four volunteer brigades, themes identified were.

- Commitment from volunteers remains strong but frustration is rising
- Training needs to be more accessible and adaptable
- Recruitment and retention challenges
- Leadership potential exists but support systems are inadequate
- Systemic disconnect between career and volunteer firefighters

Some volunteers reported the industrial action has widened the gap between career and volunteer fire fighters. Career staff recently protested outside a volunteer station and the volunteers were annoyed. LAC members are planning further engagement with volunteers to explore this issue. Acting DM will explore career staff industrial action process.

Bell Block is rapidly growing, indicating a future need for a satellite station there. Response from the District team is that it would be challenging to get a new station in this fiscal environment, even with insights that in five years Bell Block will be as big as Hawera.

An LAC member recently engaged with WISE Charitable Trust. They have said that 80-90% of the homes they go into do not have working smoke alarms. In future new builds will require a minimum number of interconnected smoke alarms but the LAC noted that this will likely increase the equity divide as it will not apply to existing homes.

**District update**

Industrial action between Fire Fighters and Fire and Emergency is ongoing. A full stoppage strike is planned for 17 October from 12-1pm where career Fire fighters will walk off the station for one hour. There are two days of negotiations booked for the 8th and 9th of October, it is hoped a resolution will be found and the strike will be cancelled.

A Future Operational Capability (FOC) and Enhanced Local Planning (ELP) forum will be held in Fielding in early November over three days, this is planned to be a pilot for other Regions. The forum will utilise the FOC process for some specific District/Region resourcing assessments, and a request from the Deputy Chief Executive Service Delivery Operations to undertake a FOC pilot and response network assessment. This will provide the platform to launch the ELP component of the FOC, for the annual District Planning process.

The District team intend to collaborate with Council to understand future growth plans such as high-density housing, population growth, infrastructure and possible risks. This will provide Fire and Emergency the data for future planning. There have been some delays in response times for some areas due to lack of daytime volunteers, having to split resources from New Plymouth central out towards Bell Block and Waitara. The District is interested in engaging with Te Atiawa Rohe regarding the possibility of a partnership and exploring what that could look like.

Phase one of the new Strategic Direction restructure has been implemented; next phase timeframe unknown but likely to be completed by March 2026.

**Community Risk Manager (CRM) Update**

**Operational Statistics (June-September):** 799 callouts recorded. Three fatal structure fires (two preventable); isolated older people were overrepresented in these fatalities.

**Risk Reduction Team:**

- Hawara Studios: Highest unwanted false alarms; the building has been closed by Council, but the fire risk remains
- Compliance concerns: YMCA Men's Shelter was occupied before sign-off; Tarerere Lodge construction has been stopped for four months due to not meeting building compliance.
- Solar farms: 450 hectares planned for Stratford

- Fire season: This season has been the longest in Taranaki history (23 Jan - 2 April 2025); 295 permits were processed, 117 sites inspected, with five permits refused
- Forecast for Summer 2025-26: Rain forecast for much of October then a mostly dry summer

Multi-agency partnerships have been established (WISE Trust, Plunket, Tamariki Ora, Age Concern, GPs) to address fire fatality factors. Home Fire Safety Visits to vulnerable communities present challenges such as access barriers due to embarrassment, trust issues, and rental tenant concerns with landlord compliance.

**General business and next meetings:**

**SharePoint Access:** The National LAC team is working to provide all LAC members with SharePoint access in preparation for a new Board Management application. New login guidance has been distributed. Members still experiencing access issues should contact IT Support on 0800 374 843.

**Community Perceptions Report (Verian):** The report included in LAC meeting packs highlights four LAC engagement types, challenges, and six principles for effective engagement.

**Previous Insights Report Follow-up:**

- **2024/25 Insight - Operational Review Learnings:** Link to operational reviews provided in meeting pack (not previously visible to LACs)
- **2023/24 Insight - Carbon Forestry Fire Risk:** Link to information and research on carbon forestry fire risk provided in meeting pack

**Update from Amit Prasad – Fire and Emergency Board member**

The Board recently visited the Bay of Plenty LAC and attended the Tairāwhiti and Southland LAC meetings. Responses to the LAC Individual Insights reports have been finalised with the Board and should be distributed to committees shortly. Insights are also responded to from District teams and there is also a feedback opportunity with the Board and LAC Chairs coming together on 5 November 2025.

**Next meeting**

5 March 2026, venue TBC Stratford – Central Taranaki

**Closing**

The meeting closed at 2:45pm with karakia from the Pou Takawaenga.

**Action Log**

| Date | Action | Responsible | Due | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 June 2025 | Amendments to Interests Register as discussed | Senior Advisor | Post meeting | Complete |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 June 2025 | Find out if Whāriki reports can be shared with District team more frequently | Senior Advisor | Post meeting | Complete |
| 5 June 2025 | Complete draft Insights Report and share with Chair | Senior Advisor | Post meeting | Complete |
| 5 June 2025 | Support with survey to be sent out to members to prioritize themes in Insights Report | Chair/Senior Advisor | Post meeting | Complete |
| 20 Feb 2025 | Amendments to the Interests Register as discussed | Senior Advisor | Post meeting | Complete |
| 20 Feb 2025 | Complete draft of Taranaki Engagement Plan, including planned engagements and circulate for review. The LAC will arrange an out-of-cycle meeting to complete its planning process. | Chair<br><br>Tracy Abel – LAC member<br><br>Senior Advisor NLAC | 30 March 2025 | Complete |
| 20 Feb 2025 | District team to provide:<br>• Diversity stats/data for Taranaki<br>• Further information on unwanted alarm stats<br>• Further information on responses to motor vehicle accidents<br>For follow up:<br>• Connecting Daniel with the Community Risk Manager regarding background on accommodation fire risks. | District Manager | Prior to Trimester 3 meeting in late May | In progress email on diversity stats sent 6 March |