



RUAPEHU DISTRICT COUNCIL

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To: Productivity Commission
Jo Smith Inquiry Director (Acting)
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Subject: **A FAIR CHANCE FOR ALL**

Submission from: Ruapehu District Council
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Council wishes to speak in support of its submission.

Ruapehu District Council (RDC) wishes to thank the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to engage with the development of the inquiry. RDC is very concerned with the livability of the Ruapehu District communities and has identified a number of challenges to improve the wellbeing of our communities. RDC is currently working on a Livability Study to inform decisions and policy in the District, through data analysis and local narrative analysis. While the Study is still in the stage of production and more narratives are still to be collected, it has given us some excellent insights into the challenges and opportunities.

RDC is submitting on behalf of its community and the issues noted below relate to the Ruapehu District.

The Ruapehu District ... where adventure begins!



The Ruapehu District is one of New Zealand's largest districts by land area, of which, 36% is Crown owned. It has a small population of approximately 13,000 scattered throughout a wide geographical area of 6,730 square kilometres, of which 40% of residents identify as Māori. Per capita, the Ruapehu District has one of the highest visitor numbers in Aotearoa. The area is predominantly rural and includes the Tongariro and Whanganui National Parks, a large portion of the Whanganui River and many tributaries cementing the District's rich natural environment and history as pivotal in Aotearoa's identity.

1 What are the main aspects of disadvantage that should be investigated in this inquiry?

For the rural community one of the biggest challenges for wellbeing is access to services. Access to health services, good education, the ability to partake in a variety of sport, including local school sports, affordable shopping, banking and other basic needs.

Health issues are also exacerbated by a shortage of primary health care, long travel distances and associated costs to access specialist health care, minimal public travel services and in the Ruapehu Districts case boundary confusions. The issues of access to health providers negatively impact on the lives of people and puts rural communities at a disadvantage for health care.

The delivery of Health services to rural communities with the associated issues noted above should form part of the inquiry.

The commission needs to look at what the barriers to services are in the rural areas and how those barriers disadvantage people and affect their quality of life.

One of the main themes from RDC's recent Livability narratives was poor access to health services.

2 Where should the Commission focus its research effort?

The underlying causes of lifelong poverty. The goal of wellbeing is to lift people out of lifelong poverty, therefore an in-depth understanding of the causes of lifelong poverty needs to be the main focus of the enquiry.

- Health poverty
- Income poverty
- Housing poverty etc

Research needs to be holistic and come to a better understanding of how lifelong disadvantage is multi layered and driven by a number of underlying issues not just one or two.

RDC research clearly show how people who are disadvantaged have a number of barriers to wellbeing, and that health, housing , income, and other metrics are interwoven into complexed obstacles to wellbeing.

3 Where should government focus its effort on finding solutions?

Understanding and removing barriers to wellbeing that harm children and can cause lifelong poverty should be the main focus for solutions going forward. Solutions also need to be



intergeneration focused, as it's the parents and grandparents that will have the major influence on changing the outcomes.

The government should also look to tailor policy and strategic change through locality needs. A one size fits all solution may not benefit a rural area like an urban, for example – rural communities may not have public transport thus making it harder to reach health providers, whereas urban areas have regular bus routes etc.

The government should also consider to look for finding solutions in rural communities and towns, where historically infrastructure was built for larger communities that have since diminished. There is opportunity for growth in these areas with more investment from government to provide equal accessibility options to all, thus creating a more fair chance for all.

