

Submission on the Thames-Coromandel District Council and Hauraki District Council Mangrove Management Bill

To the: **Governance and Administration Committee**

This submission is in the name of the **Thames-Coromandel District Council**.

The Council wishes to appear before the Committee to speak to its submission.

The address for service is:

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The Council wishes that the following appear in support of its submission:

- Mayor Sandra Goudie
- Chief Executive Rob Williams

The Submission

The Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) supports the intent of the Bill and its clauses in their entirety for the following reasons:

- The current mangrove management regime is not working: it is time-consuming, costly, and divisive and has left damaged relationships between communities and their local authorities.
- A different approach is required.
- It is the Council's view that a community driven process based on consensus and good science is the answer to managing mangroves such that a balance is achieved that recognises all important harbour and estuarine values: ecological, amenity and recreational.
- This Bill is that answer. It seeks to empower local communities, assisted by their councils, to achieve the balanced outcomes that they seek for their precious harbour environments.

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The Council wishes to make the following general comments:

- The coastal communities of both the TCDC and the Hauraki District Council (HDC), have become increasingly concerned at the spread of mangroves within their respective harbours and estuaries.
- Mangrove incursion since the 1940s has resulted in a loss of access and recreational opportunities and a diminution of harbour and estuarine values including:
 - Visual amenity;
 - Natural character impacting iconic coastal- and seascapes;
 - Ecological values with diverse ecosystems being gradually replaced with a monoculture;
 - Loss of shorebird feeding habitat at the internationally significant Firth of Thames Ramsar tidal wetland.
- It is acknowledged that mangroves do have a place in harbour and estuarine environments but not at the expense of all other values. The councils, on behalf of their communities, seek a balance in this regard that is based on community consensus supported by good science.
- The cost of managing mangrove incursions is a key driver of community concern with the current process.
- For example, since the early 2000s in the Whangamata harbour alone some \$1.5 million has been expended; with the greater proportion of that being consumed by administrative process rather than operational management.
- The greater proportion of this sum was raised by way of a targeted rate against that community which is largely made up of retirees on fixed incomes, to address an issue that, given the recognised outstanding values of the Coromandel's harbours, is, if not of national concern, then certainly is of regional significance.
- It is understandable then, that the councils' preference is to see their limited financial resources more effectively and efficiently utilised in the provision of core infrastructure and services, such as waste water treatment plants and catchment sediment management schemes to further protect estuarine and harbour environments.
- In short, the existing mangrove management regime under the Resource Management Act 1991 has been costly, time-consuming, and divisive and has not delivered desirable outcomes.
- An unfortunate outcome in the latter regard of the process to date is the relationship between local concerned communities and their regional council. It is the Council's wish that the mechanisms that this bill seeks to establish will go some way toward mending community and regional council relationships.

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The Thames-Coromandel District Council thanks the Committee for the opportunity to present its submission and commends the Bill for its consideration.