

Mayor's Speech – Inaugural Meeting

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. Good morning ladies and gentlemen of Kaipara District, distinguished guests, friends and whanau – thank you for joining us for this celebration and Inaugural Meeting of the new Kaipara District Council. It's great to be here with you and there is much to celebrate. As we gather today at the start of the new term, filled with hopes and dreams, I have **two** very important words of celebration you might not be expecting right now: Happy Birthday! Kaipara District, you're now 30 years old, and your council held its first inaugural meeting here 30 years ago in 1989. I'd like to acknowledge former councillors and mayors present today..... and thank you for your part in the journey.

In those 30 years there have been good times, not so good times, and times so bad the lights nearly went out. But the lights DIDN'T go out, and though the road's been rough (and some people would say the roads are STILL pretty rough around here but let's not spoil the party by talking about the roads) we're still here. Like a phoenix we've risen from the ashes, better now than ever. Follow me as I explain.

Kaipara's back in business. Where once its debt levels were truly horrible, after a time of austerity, council debt is now significantly reduced and Kaipara finds itself safely in the middle of the pack of councils for debt per capita – ranked something like number 35 of 67 territorial councils across New Zealand. "Normal transmission" is resuming. We still have much to be doing, like getting on with those roads. But there's no time for looking back now, except to see how far we've come.

This is now your second Council since the end of the Kaipara Commission. Last term we appointed our Chief Executive Louise Miller, the most important decision any council makes. It's working out well. With Louise and her refreshed team of council officers, we as your elected representatives will be helping shape the future of Kaipara District. And the future here is particularly bright. This renewed council is going from strength to strength and we have three new Councillors who've been sworn in today, adding to the five re-elected and me. The team you see with me here on stage (Anna, Karen, Victoria, Eryn, Jonathon, David, Mark and Peter) has a great blend of experience and new energy and ideas, and I'm really pleased for all of Kaipara District that such a fine bunch have stood for election. It's already been announced that I have chosen Anna Curnow as Deputy Mayor. Anna's interests, community involvement and engagement span the district and exemplify the Kaipara-wide attitudes that I believe will serve **all** Kaipara people best for the term ahead. At this time I would also like to thank outgoing Deputy Mayor Peter Wethey for his invaluable support, constancy and diligence during the last term. Will you please join with me in celebrating the work of both Anna and Peter now.

With this team of elected members I'm confident the District is in good hands. Thank you to each of you for stepping up here to serve our community. And to your supporting whanau and families, thank **you** for helping make this possible. Your contributions, some would call them sacrifices, are duly noted and much appreciated. Because no-one up here is doing it alone. Thank you.

And alone is something that Kaipara District certainly no longer is, though it may have appeared we've been in the wilderness for a time. Collaborations and partnerships are the name of the game and for Kaipara District Council in the term ahead you should expect to see strengthening

relationships with our iwi partners and neighbouring councils. The increasing strength of these relationships is evidenced in the fact we've all shared a powhiri this morning with our key iwi partners from Te Uri o Hau, Te Roroa, Te Kuihi, Te Parawhau and Ngati Whatua. You've also witnessed elected members swearing their solemn oath to serve Kaipara District in both English and te reo Maori – and that's a first, possibly anywhere in New Zealand. Coming up sometime soon with Te Iwi o Te Roroa we'll be having an official signing ceremony of our joint Relationship Mana Enhancing Agreement, and we're also looking to refresh the Memorandum of Understanding between KDC and Te Uri o Hau. We're making real progress on partnerships together here, and I couldn't be prouder of our approach to kotahitanga.

We're also making real progress with our neighbouring councils, and it's especially delightful to be graced today with the presence of Her Worship the Mayor of Whangarei Sheryl Mai. Thank you Sheryl for your attendance and I'm somewhat pleased you didn't bring your massive Whangarei mayoral chains and ermine-fringed robes because we don't stretch to anything flash like that here in the Kaipara and we'd just look like the poor country cousins. Even though we're not so poor any more, but that bit's a bit complicated to explain. Nau mai, haere mai Koromatua. While I'm mentioning dignitaries, I'd also like to acknowledge Matt King MP for Northland who's joined us today. Thank you for supporting local government in Northland and being here with us in Kaipara.

Kaipara does good collaboration. The way we weave a strong cloak or korowai is with many threads which are woven fine but tightly together, binding us as one but made up of separate strands. It's been decided that it's Kaipara's turn to lead both the Northland Mayoral Forum and also chair meetings of Local Government New Zealand Zone 1/Northland Forward Together for this term, which are the combined meetings of all the councillors of the four councils of the north. Our Kaipara voice is growing stronger. And then, to top it off, Northland Regional Council is planning to build a new \$8m office building for themselves and us directly across the road from here, and they're allowing KDC to be their main tenant.

Everyone else is starting to work out we're an attractive place to be. Popular is our new middle name, and Kaipara District has the fastest growing population of any North Island district in the last six years, at 20.6% growth. That means one in every five people in Kaipara today has arrived in the last six years. This is a quiet revolution bringing new citizens, new residents, new energy, investments and ideas to this fertile place. As a council we'll be working hard to shape the future of the Kaipara which is already growing fast, particularly in the east. And we'll continually criss-cross the district, encouraging cross-pollination of energy and ideas, bringing the east to the west and vice versa, working for all of Kaipara District just as in the oaths we've sworn before you today. I reckon in these deliberate cross-Kaipara approaches lies the great untapped opportunity and strength of Kaipara District. Sports events or art trails that span from coast to coast – why not? Again, it's a bit like weaving that korowai – cross, cross, cross back again, warp, weft, woof, weaving more tightly and gaining strength as we go. Together. That's what we'll be doing, as your council, and I hope you and everyone in the community keep crossing Kaipara District and adding many coloured threads to this korowai we're all weaving together.

Good governance and decision-making by your council means as we go we'll be watching closely the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of our people and this place. We will be doing that. But things out there are getting more complicated and the media presents once far-away problems of climate change, sea level rise and global warming for us to tackle. Despite the media,

Kaipara people are practical, no-nonsense people who don't do hysteria, and with that attitude in mind we should work towards a Kaipara kind of no-fuss response to sustainability and climate issues. I reckon we should just get on with the job of being Climate-smart Kaipara. I'll repeat that – Climate-smart Kaipara, which means that we're a place that's using the best smart technologies and innovations combined with local common sense to make our way forward. Climate-smart Kaipara may include waste minimisation strategies, plastic recycling, water storage projects, regenerative agriculture where farmers use the many thousands of hectares of Kaipara pasture land as a carbon sink, new tropical kinds of crops or animals, world-class drainage engineering or a council that's consciously reducing its carbon footprint. I propose we start gathering these sorts of ideas now for the Climate-smart Kaipara we need to become, and ask everyone in the community to start thinking what we can do here. If we've done our job right, thirty years from now, when there's a future celebration of a future Climate-smart Kaipara council here, I reckon they'll be damned grateful for what we started in 2019.

So here we are, standing at the gate of the term and I'm at the end of my speech. I leave you with a final simple but mighty thought. It's an obligation we have been given, which is to make Kaipara District a place of thriving communities, working together. Come with us on this journey, between these two oceans and two harbours filled with the "Kaipara te oranganui" promise of abundant wellbeing. For it's all of ours to share, together. Others will want join us too, in record numbers so it seems, so we'll need to keep the welcome mat out. Let's weave a beautiful korowai as we journey across this place. And let's make it a Climate-smart Kaipara as we go!

Nga mihi nui kia koutou katoa.