

A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE GARRY POOLE

Welcome to the Wellington City Council's 2008/09 annual plan.

We are forecasting total operating expenditure of \$329 million, which represents an average real rates increase of 5.18%, after allowing for growth in the ratepayer base.

We acknowledge that rising fuel and food prices are placing pressure on many household budgets, and that higher rates can add to that pressure. While we would have liked to hold the rates increase below 5.18%, doing so would have required cuts to the services we provide.

Although a small number of people who commented on our draft annual plan asked us to defer some work to keep the rates increase down, the balance of opinion was in favour of new projects, and there was opposition to non-urgent deferrals that we had outlined.

It is important to note that, while councillors have committed to some new projects for 2008/09, to a large extent the increase in total rates reflects increasing cost pressures we face in delivering key services such as maintaining the transport network and looking after the city's environment. Like you, we are facing higher fuel and energy costs.

It is also important to note that despite this year's increase, Wellington rates are not high by national standards.

Finally, in the coming year we will be reviewing our entire work programme as we develop our next long-term plan, which will cover the period from 2009 to 2019.

As part of this review, we will be asking residents to take a close look at the work we do, and give us a clear indication of where we should draw the line between affordability and quality of service. We hope, from that feedback, to be able to develop a programme that meets residents' aspirations for the city.

This is a key challenge – one that needs your input.



GARRY POOLE

 *Our vision is of Wellington as an affordable internationally competitive city.*